THE RITUAL
4TH DRAFT

Written by

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Based on 'The Ritual' by Adam Nevill

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1 INT. PUB - NIGHT 1

Busy central London pub. Football on the telly, music blaring. Standing room only. Through the throng weaves LUKE, carrying a tray of beers.

A young Pool Shark, maybe 25, nearly spills the beers with his cue as he lines up to take a shot.

LUKE
Watch it.

POOL SHARK
You fucking watch it.

LUKE shakes his head. *What a dick.* He keeps moving toward a tall table in the corner around which stand DOM, HUTCH, ROBERT and PHIL.

PHIL
Ibiza.

ROBERT
We're too old for Ibiza.

LUKE starts handing out pints

LUKE
You're never too old for Ibiza!

DOM
That's what people who are too old for Ibiza always say. Right before they go, and look like twats. Did you forget my crisps?

LUKE
Landlord's cut you off. Said you should try eating a fucking salad for once.

DOM
Dickhead.

PHIL
What about Amsterdam?

HUTCH
Too touristy these days.

PHIL
Oh hark at the Anne Frank house hipster.

ROBERT
Tuscany.

LUKE
No.

ROBERT
The Dordogne.

LUKE
De-doi-what? No, we're going somewhere fun. You all remember fun, yeah? Joie de vivre? Esprit de corps. Et Tu Brutus? Us five, sunburnt on a banana boat with a bunch of drunk gap year students.

DOM
Aren't gap year students like nineteen years old?

LUKE
If that, mate. If that.

2 INT. PUB - NIGHT 2

The five of them snake their way out of the pub.

PHIL
Reykjavik.

LUKE
Too dear. But I like where your head's at. Swedish girls.

DOM
Anyone want to tell him where Reykjavik is?

LUKE finishes his pint as he walks, more than a little drunk.

They pass by the pool table just as the Pool Shark lines up the winning shot. LUKE instinctively puts his upside down glass over the eight ball as the Pool Shark hits the white ball.

The white ball clinks off the glass. A collective holler from the men at the table. A flare in the Pool shark's eyes.

LUKE quickly follows the others out of the pub.

Caption: January

3 INT. SOHO - NIGHT 3

Revellers everywhere, pubs over-spilling. Urban colour and noise.

Through this walk the five men - DOM at the back, then PHIL, then ROBERT, HUTCH and LUKE. DOM is eating a kebab, he trips over a curb and gets sauce on his shirt, swears violently.

ROBERT
Helen and her friends went on a wilderness trek, in the Alps, said it was beautiful.

HUTCH
We could try rock climbing?

DOM
Yeah, I'm vetoing the activity weekend.

ROBERT
Why?

DOM
Cos I'm not trying to get my fucking Scouts badge that's why.

PHIL rolls his eyes at the others.

They've reached a late night supermarket.

LUKE
Hold up I'm getting a bottle.

DOM
It's a school night.

LUKE
What, are we too old to stay up past eleven as well now? Whose idea was it to meet on a Thursday anyway?

PHIL
Thursday's the new Friday.

LUKE
So let's have a fucking drink then.

The others look at him.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Robert. Boblickson. Mr Robert Robbyson. Come on.

ROBERT
Alright I'll come in with you.

LUKE
Thank you. I'm gonna get a lovely bottle of bubbly vodka and we're gonna drink to our trip to Sweden.

HUTCH
Alright champ.

LUKE and Robert head towards the supermarket. HUTCH gets a fag out and lights it.

PHIL
(singing)
Forever young/Foreeeever young. Say you'll stay...

The other two smirk

4 INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT 4

The doors slide open with a 'ding' and LUKE and Robert enter.

The radio plays a pop song in the background. A bored CLERK barely glances up from the tills.

We follows LUKE and Robert as they walk through the aisles.

LUKE
Every time we meet it gets harder to have a good time. Phil actually suggested making this a brunch. I'm not planning a lads holiday over a fucking avocado, Rob, I'm just not doing it mate.

5 INT. SUPERMARKET - ALCOHOL AISLE - NIGHT 5

They reach the booze and LUKE sets about choosing.

LUKE
So you really want a walking holiday?

ROBERT
If you like Sweden there's a Scandinavian wilderness trail I was reading about.

LUKE
Yeah wasn't really what I had in mind. Hutch would probably love it.

He goes back to looking at the booze.

ROBERT
Dom seem alright to you?

LUKE
That ain't Dom. That's the ghost of Dom's past.

ROBERT
Seems a bit distracted is all.

LUKE
He'll be fine. Just needs to get pissed.

LUKE moves along the aisle. Robert hangs back at the end. Checks his watch when LUKE's not looking.

Up the aisle LUKE moves along the bottles selecting carefully.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Thing is with Dom. With all of them, really. Is he's too comfortable. He's got his missus and his six figures per annum and he's perfectly content to sit around on his ever expanding arse and let that be that. But there's more, you know? More to life. He was captain of the swim team at school. Did you know that? Had a fucking six pack. Girls loved him. I was honestly worried sometimes that he was literally going to drown in pussy. Ironically, given his athletic status. It's just a shame what he's become: An extremely successful businessman with a beautiful wife and children. Here, what do you think about this one?

He turns, bottle in hand. Robert is looking back at him from down the aisle. But something's wrong. Behind him the Pool Shark from the pub has arrived and is standing with TWO MATES. He is holding LUKE's empty pint glass, with the eight ball in it.

POOL SHARK
You're a dickhead mate.

LUKE
You gonna drink that?

ROBERT
Alright chaps lets not get silly, ey?

POOL SHARK
Apologise.

LUKE
What for?

POOL SHARK
I'm not going to ask you again.

LUKE
That's a relief.

ROBERT
Look, we're -

The Pool Shark glasses ROBERT in the head who collapses, clocking his face on the shelving unit on the way down with a loud, sickening, crunch. He lies in a heap on the floor. Blood oozing from his head.

He lies very still.

LUKE stares at ROBERT's blood. We hear the eight ball bouncing off the floor tile.

LUKE is <u>frozen</u> in fear. Can't move.

The eight ball rolls right along the floor and bounces off LUKE's foot. A trail of blood behind it. Off that image --

6 EXT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT 6

HUTCH, DOM and PHIL are outside. Standing next to the long panels of glass windows. The Pool Shark and his mates shove out of the store and run off.

PHIL
What's taking them so bloody long?

Inside we see the CLERK dialing a number frantically on his phone. The men notice.

The doors to the supermarket ping open. LUKE steps out. The bottle of liquor that he still carries, unnoticed, in his hand sets off the alarms. They shriek and whistle. He seems to be having a panic attack. Almost gasping for air. A terrified, desperate, look on his face.

HUTCH
Luke?

He doesn't answer.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
Luke?

The alarm gets louder. And louder. And louder. A GUST OF WIND blows across LUKE's face. Litter sweeps across the frame.

7 INT. TENT - MORNING 7

LUKE wakes up. The wind is picking up against the tent.

It takes him a few seconds to remember where he is. He gets out of his sleeping bag and unzips his tent.

8 EXT. HIGHLANDS - CAMP - MORNING 8

LUKE walks in the early morning sunlight over to a rock and sits on it. Lights a cigarette against the wind. Around him is spectacular Swedish countryside.

He regards four tents in a circle. Only his is open.

CAPTION: July

LUKE coughs. And a moment later another of the tents unzips. HUTCH emerges. Squints at LUKE.

HUTCH
Morning.

LUKE nods at him.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
I'm gonna get coffee on.

He gets out of his tent, holding a pan and a tin of coffee. He kicks the other two tents.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
You two, wake up.

HUTCH gets a camping stove lit. DOM and then PHIL both emerge from their tents. PHIL pulls an eye mask off.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
How'd you sleep?

DOM
Like I'd spent all day walking up a fucking mountain.

PHIL gets out, picks up a map from the lip of HUTCH's tent.

HUTCH
One night down, two to go.

DOM nods, glances at LUKE who forces a grin. DOM looks away quickly.

LUKE finishes his cigarette and flicks it away.

9 EXT. HIGHLANDS - MOUNTAIN RANGE - DAY 9

Drone shot into the hike. We cruise through a great valley, picking up four small dots and moving closer until they are revealed to be HUTCH, LUKE, DOM and PHIL, trekking along a wilderness trail.

Mountain tops tower over them.

HUTCH
Makes you feel insignificant, huh?

DOM
Speak for yourself.

HUTCH
This is the land of giants, monsters, and God's with big fucking hammers, Dom. Don't tell me you're not impressed.

DOM
You know what you get on walking trails in England? Pubs. Shit loads of them. So until these Scandi bastards build somewhere I can get a pint and a sandwich up here I remain unmoved.

HUTCH cuffs him on the back of the head and DOM makes an ineffectual attempt to kick him up the arse. PHIL grins at LUKE who barely musters a smile.

10 EXT. HIKING SHACK - DAY 10

A bare wood, fairly modern structure stands on a wind swept hill. HUTCH, DOM and PHIL poke around inside. DOM takes a seat on the provided bench. HUTCH is looking at the surrounding hills.

LUKE sneaks a sip from a hip flask.

HUTCH checks his compass against the map. Looks up ahead.

HUTCH
I think I found a spot.

11 EXT. HILL - DAY 11

The Brits climb a tall hill. DOM at the back, struggling, then PHIL. HUTCH out ahead, the fittest of the group. LUKE powers on, ignoring his rasping lungs.

12 EXT. HILLTOP - DAY 12

LUKE joins HUTCH at the top. He gets his breath back.

LUKE
Fuck me.

LUKE looks out. Ahead of them is a vast sea of trees. Beyond a thin strip of the forest they can make out buildings, smoke rising from chimneys.

He straightens up and lights a cigarette.

HUTCH
Can't deny that view, huh?

LUKE exhales smoke and tries to catch his breath.

LUKE
Giants, monsters, and Gods with big fucking hammers?

HUTCH
(grinning, pleased)
Magnificent.

DOM and PHIL arrive. PHIL collapses onto the ground. DOM sinks to his knees.

DOM
Help me Jesus.

PHIL looks at the buildings in the distance.

PHIL
Fuck every hill in the world.

DOM
Agreed.

HUTCH
Right. Shall we do this then?

13 EXT. HILL TOP - DAY 13

The four of them build a little monument. They make a cairn by piling stones on top of one another and place tea lights around it which LUKE lights with his cigarette lighter. To this they add a photo of Robert and four trinkets - PHIL places a ukelele. DOM places A Tottenham scarf. LUKE puts down a stuffed Labrador toy.

HUTCH
Bo will be up there waiting for him.

PHIL
I hated that bloody dog.

PHIL is trying to undercut the emotion of the moment. He looks at the others, all wrapped up in it. He sighs, looks down at his feet.

HUTCH
He was a good man. He was the best of us.

DOM
(pointedly)
It should never have happened.

LUKE is slightly stung. Glances at DOM who doesn't look at him.

HUTCH
No. But it did, and all we can do is remember him.

LUKE stares at the shrine, emotion threatening to over take him.

HUTCH opens a little bottle of whisky. He sips it, passes it around. DOM hands it to LUKE without looking at him. He takes a sip and gives it back to HUTCH who empties the rest on the ground. He then places the bottle on the vigil.

A few moments of silence.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
Robert. We miss you mate.

DOM is the first to turn away. He's holding something back - anger. He stalks off. HUTCH and PHIL follow. LUKE is left there, looking at the shrine alone.

14 EXT. HILL TOP - TWILIGHT 14

The four of them lie outside their tents. PHIL has an eye mask propped on the top of his head. HUTCH has a campfire going. He is cooking hotdogs.

DOM is staring at the food.

DOM
I am going to absolutely destroy that.

HUTCH
Might be a little dry.

DOM
I don't care mate. I could suck that Frankfurter right out the pig.

HUTCH
Well there's a mental image.

HUTCH serves up a hotdog in a bun and hands it to DOM. LUKE brings something out of his bag. Sits down opposite DOM and shows him. It's a tiny bottle of ketchup.

LUKE
Swiped it from the lodge.

After a brief pause DOM reaches out and takes it.

DOM
Thanks.

PHIL is lying back with a head-torch on. He flicks it on and off. DOM looks over to him.

DOM (CONT'D)
Why did you bring that? We've been here seventy two hours and the sun hasn't gone down once.

PHIL
Bit like your missus on honeymoon.

DOM gives him the finger but everyone laughs. Even LUKE gives a small smile.

HUTCH
Almost summer solstice. About three hours of dusk and then the sun's up again. Must have a hell of a time getting their kids to sleep.

HUTCH hands LUKE a hotdog and DOM chucks the ketchup back for him. A mini truce. He tucks in.

15 EXT. HILL TOP - CONTINUED TWILIGHT 15

The four of them sit outside. PHIL is talking about work, DOM and HUTCH listening intently.

PHIL
I keep telling them we need to be more aggressive in our approach but the fact is Europe have us over a barrel. Might even move our headquarters out of London.
(MORE)

PHIL (CONT'D)
I could end up living in this place for all I know.

Above them the sky is vast and dark blue and dotted with stars. LUKE lies back, ignoring the chat. Nearby the candles are dying around Robert's shrine.

LUKE gets up and walks to the edge to take a piss. In the distance he can just make out some lights.

HUTCH joins him.

LUKE
(RE: Lights)
Is that the lodge?

HUTCH
Closer than you think isn't it.
(beat)
Rob would have loved it here.

LUKE
Well, Sweden was his choice.

HUTCH
Yeah.
(pause)
Life's a journey, you know. You can never pack for every eventuality. Just meet the challenges head on when they come.

LUKE looks at him.

LUKE
That's absolute fucking nonsense isn't it.

HUTCH nods.

HUTCH
Yeah.

LUKE puts a hand on HUTCH's shoulder.

LUKE
Appreciate it.

HUTCH looks pleased, slaps LUKE on the back, glad his duty as a friend has been met.

16 INT. TENT - MORNING 16

The patter of rain on the top of the tent. LUKE doesn't appear to be sleeping.

17 EXT. HILL TOP - MORNING 17

The Brits scramble to pack their tents away in a light drizzle of rain. Robert's shrine is soaked, the candles out, the scarf and dog toy soggy, the photos folding in on themselves.

18 EXT. HIGHLANDS - EMBANKMENT - DAY 18

The four of them walk over a wet rocky embankment. LUKE and HUTCH begin to pull away from the other two.

PHIL is walking painfully. He is wearing sodden skinny jeans and he pulls at them now with red chaffed fingers, trying to get the heavy material away from his thighs. He sucks air into his mouth in pain and grimaces.

DOM passes him.

PHIL
This is awful in almost every conceivable way.

They stagger on.

DOM
I can't remember the last time I was this-

DOM takes a step forward, but his foot slips on a rock and he goes down hard.

Ahead, HUTCH and LUKE turn as they hear him yelling and swearing in pain as he slides fifteen feet down a hill until he hits a rock and stops.

19 EXT - HIGHLANDS - EMBANKMENT - DAY 19

LUKE and HUTCH hover over DOM who is in a crumpled heap at the bottom of the incline. He's holding his knee.

DOM
Fucking fuck, fucking *shit.*

PHIL is trying to crouch down next to him but his jeans, so sodden tight with rain water, won't let him.

DOM (CONT'D)
I think it's twisted.

HUTCH helps DOM up.

HUTCH
Can you walk on it?

DOM hobbles along before collapsing with a yelp of pain.

PHIL
Christ, is that broken?

HUTCH
Dom, you feel like throwing up?

DOM
I feel like fucking punching something.

HUTCH
I don't think it's broken but that knee's probably twisted. We need to get you something to lean on. Phil? Grab the rods, will you?

PHIL
(sighing)
On it.

PHIL begins to nose around in HUTCH's pack. DOM sits holding his leg painfully.

DOM
Shit. *Shit.*

HUTCH looks back the way they came.

HUTCH
What do you think? Six hours back to yesterday's camp site, another eight back to the lodge?

DOM
Fuck me. I can't walk for fourteen hours on this.

HUTCH
Phil, give us your GPS thingy won't you.

PHIL tosses it to HUTCH who catches it. He presses a button on its side. The little machine whistles loudly as it turns on.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
See if R2-bloody-D2 can find us a better route.

HUTCH finds a packet of fags in his pocket and offers them around. LUKE takes one. He and HUTCH walk away from the other two slightly and bring out and spread the map over a rock and check it against the GPS finder.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
Dom isn't messing about, that knee's fucked, no mistake.
(MORE)

HUTCH (CONT'D)
He's not going to make it back to the town, not without helicopter.

HUTCH traces the map, finds their position on the GPS.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
Okay here we are. Middle of sodding nowhere.

LUKE
We might really have to get that helicopter you know.

HUTCH
We can't call a chopper in because Dom's fallen over. Besides...

HUTCH digs out his mobile.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
No bars.

LUKE shows him his phone.

LUKE
No battery.

HUTCH
Okay. Well this is a dilly of a pickle, isn't it.

HUTCH studies the map, intensely.

HUTCH moves his finger down the map, towards a wide expanse of green.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
This is what we saw from the hill.

He points to the thin section of the forest.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
Cut through there, cut the journey in half.

LUKE
Through the forest?

HUTCH
A little off trail hiking. Straight South West we could be back at the lodge by this evening.

LUKE
Why don't you and me leave them with the food and go back and get help.

DOM (O.S.)
Fuck off are you leaving us on this fucking mountain.

HUTCH and LUKE look over to the other two who have been listening in. DOM is getting up onto his feet.

DOM (CONT'D)
I can walk.

LUKE turns, we follow his gaze to the forest behind him, huge and shrouded in mist.

20 EXT. FOREST OUTSKIRTS - DAY 20

A grassy field of sporadic trees leading up to the lip of the forest. DOM is walking, a slight limp.

HUTCH
How's the knee, Dom-Dom?

DOM
Killing me.

HUTCH roots around in his bag and tosses a little bottle of aspirin at DOM.

HUTCH
Don't OD.

DOM necks a few aspirin and looks up at the trees.

DOM
Are there bears in this forest?

HUTCH
Might be.

DOM
We should have gone to Vegas.

PHIL
Oh, you'd have found something to fall over there as well.

DOM
Yeah, a big pile of booze, money and prostitutes.

LUKE moves further away from them, staring intently at the trees.

HUTCH
There might be some prossies in there, you never know.

PHIL
I've got some sleeping pills.

HUTCH
And I'm sure Phil'll give you a hand job if you ask nicely.

PHIL
What happens in Sweden stays in Sweden.

DOM
Piss off.

LUKE slows down as he passes something in the grass - a rusted old VW camper, looking like something out of the 1950s.

PHIL
Everything in this bastard country is a relic.

HUTCH
Think they need a push start?

PHIL grins. DOM limps over to the car and prises its logo off the bonnet. They continue on.

DOM
My boy collects these.

PHIL snaps a picture of DOM by the car on his phone.

They continue on, LUKE stares at the car a few beats, then carries on, stepping into the lead of the pack.

HUTCH looks at the GPS which he still has in his hand. He frowns at the thing. Smacks it against his palm.

PHIL
It's a bit temperamental. Tried it out in Hyde Park and got lost.

HUTCH presses a few buttons. It beeps at him.

HUTCH
Ah, here we go. Think this is about where we want to be.

DOM
Is this where we want to be, though?

HUTCH
You scared of the woods, Dom?

DOM gives him the finger.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
Straight South West from here, we'll be back in the village and having an obscenely overpriced pint in no time.

HUTCH pats DOM on the back.

LUKE looks around as the trees get thicker around them.

The four men carry on but we stay back, taking in the immensity and scope of the forest ahead of them as the four of them disappear into the dark mass of trees.

21 EXT. LUSH FOREST - DAY 21

The forest is wild and beautiful, green moss floor, birds chirping in the trees. They move through a relatively open expanse.

HUTCH looks down at the compass - South West still. He is whistling, but the jollyness of the tune sounds forced in this setting.

DOM limps along. Rain hits the top of trees above them, occasionally great torrents of water drip down onto them.

HUTCH checks his compass again and his grin wavers, the needle flits between South West and North East, as though it's suddenly unsure which way they're facing... HUTCH taps it. The needle returns to South West to his relief. He looks up, the others are forging ahead, he hurries to catch up with them.

22 EXT. LUSH FOREST - DAY 22

They walk.

HUTCH
Fuck.

LUKE
What?

HUTCH
I didn't take a photo on the hill. I was going to send it to Rob's wife.

DOM
Why would she want a photo of us there?

HUTCH
I dunno. She was pleased we were doing this. Doesn't want us to forget him.

LUKE
Well let's just take a photo now.

PHIL
What, here's us getting lost in a forest?

HUTCH
Nobody's lost.

DOM
Alright fine, I need to send my kids a picture anyway. They didn't believe me when I told them I was going hiking.

HUTCH
See if Gayle believes it when she sees how much weight you've lost.

PHIL
Keep feeding him hot dogs she won't.

HUTCH brings out a selfie stick from his backpack.

LUKE
(RE: stick)
Wanker.

PHIL smirks.

HUTCH
Shut up.

The four of them gather together, put their arms around one another. HUTCH holds the camera out and takes a photo. The flash lights up the woods around them.

HUTCH checks the phone.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
Must be getting dark.

LUKE
Aye. Let's keep going.

23 EXT. LUSH FOREST - DAY 23

Towering spruce trees loom over the forest. We sit with the image for a moment, listening to the sounds of nature.

Then we see the men emerge from between the trunks. Tiny by comparison. We watch them wind through the forest from some distant vantage.

24 EXT. LUSH FOREST - DIMMING 24

HUTCH's walking stick suddenly snaps under DOM's weight and he goes down, yelling in pain. HUTCH helps him up.

HUTCH
You alright?

DOM
No I'm not fucking alright. Why isn't anyone else falling over?

We pull back slightly and see that the forest has grown tighter. LUKE looks around him at the close knit trees, the wet leaves, the faint blanket of mist. He has to push through a thick mass of shrubs. He holds the foliage back as the others pass him.

They walk on. PHIL glances backwards, nervously. HUTCH starts whistling again but quickly stops.

PHIL looks up at the sky which is growing dark.

PHIL
Is it getting darker or is it just me?

HUTCH
Don't panic. I told you - three hours of dusk, it just never gets truly dark.

DOM
It didn't get this dark yesterday.

LUKE
We weren't in the woods yesterday.

DOM
No, we bloody weren't.

HUTCH
Come on. Sooner we get going, sooner we get to the town, sooner we get to the bar.

LUKE picks up a suitable walking stick replacement and tosses it to DOM who catches it.

DOM
Amen.

On they go.

25 EXT. JAGGED FOREST - DUSK 25

The four of them trudge forward through a tight cluster of horizontal tree spikes. DOM is grimacing and lightly cussing.

No one else speaks, each is in their own little world. LUKE pushes through, his eyes taking in the surroundings, working over the trees and undergrowth. Listening out at the bird calls that occasionally echo through the forest when --

A fly buzzes around his face. He swats it away.

HUTCH
Anyone else getting hungry?

PHIL
Famished.

LUKE
I could eat.

They all look at DOM.

DOM
What do you think?

HUTCH
I'm thinking... Steak. Medium rare. Bit bloody. Peppercorn sauce. Thick cut chips, side salad. A nice tumbler of scotch. Maybe a cigar afterwards.

DOM
Big Mac. On a plastic tray, by myself, no one talking to me.

HUTCH grins.

PHIL
A nice cold beer. Pre-theatre dinner, post-theatre drinks.

LUKE
Kebab.

DOM
Oh god yes. Donner?

LUKE swats at another fly that's bothering him.

LUKE
Chicken shish.

DOM
(appreciatively)
Chicken shish! Salad with that sir?

PHIL also twitches away from a fly. Smacking a hand against his neck.

LUKE
Onion, tomato, and lettuce. Chilli sauce. Chips stuffed *into* the pita.

DOM
Maestro, maestro...

LUKE
For best results serve on night bus. Perfect.

PHIL
You're such white trash.

LUKE
It's not fine dining but it's good enough for me.

LUKE shakes his head. The fly returns, he waves it away. HUTCH has to do similar.

HUTCH
Don't worry, we've got a nice meal of boiled noodles to look forward to-

HUTCH stops. A tree, its roots half over the path, stands just at the peak of the descent.

There's something in the branches.

The sound of many flies in the air suddenly becomes horribly apparent. LUKE draws level with HUTCH, follows his gaze. The tree is about fifteen metres away.

DOM and PHIL join them.

PHIL
What's going on?

LUKE
There’s something there.

PHIL digs around in his pocket and brings out his glasses.

PHIL
What is it?

They all walk forward, tentatively. Something about this feels wrong. Though you couldn’t put your finger on what. Not until they get closer and see what it is. What it *was*.

What it was, was an elk. Now it’s a corpse.

It hangs, slightly above head height, from the branches that protrude over the path. Its stomach is cut open, flayed almost. Strings of muscle and flesh splay out, caught in the tree like a spider’s web. The head of the animal is lolling loosely to one side. On the ground in front of it are its insides, fallen onto the blood soaked dirt.

PHIL(CONT’D)
Jesus Christ.

They all stare at it.

DOM
What did that?

PHIL
Could be a bear?

DOM
Would a bear do that?

PHIL
I don’t know, Dom, I’m not a fucking bear expert am I?

HUTCH
Don’t worry. This is just the bit they don’t show you on the nature documentaries. Meat doesn’t come out of a freezer in the wild.

PHIL
I don’t think this was eaten.

DOM
Okay. Can we keep going please?

PHIL
Yeah. Lets keep moving, guys.

They start to walk, each of them has to pass underneath the ruined creature. Blood drips from its hooves onto the ground.

LUKE
It’s still bleeding.

DOM
So?

They all look at him for an explanation. He shrugs.

LUKE
Fresh kill.

An aghast silence from the others.

DOM
Oh fuck off.

They hurry on.

26 EXT. JAGGED FOREST - TWILIGHT 26

The sun is low in the sky, the first creeping tendrils of darkness are snaking through the trees. The men trudge forward.

HUTCH stops, he reaches into his bag and brings something out - a torch. He turns it on with a ‘click’.

It’s a symbol, for just how badly this has gone. The men behind him visibly sag, giving in to the inevitability of a night in these woods.

One by one they, too, find and turn on their torches.

‘Click’.

‘Click’.

‘Click’.

‘Boom!’ - Lightening and thunder cut through the night, adding to the four torch beams.

27 EXT. JAGGED FOREST - NIGHT 27

We can hear the sound of a torrential rain storm pounding on the canopy above them. Occasional claps of thunder and glimpses of forked lightning.

The four of them walk through the kind of darkness you forget exists. Four beams of light, tripping and stumbling through a blackness so thick, so all encompassing, that it feels palpable, like you could reach out and scoop it up in your hands.

PHIL
This isn’t fucking ‘dusk.’

DOM
Where the hell are we, Hutch?

HUTCH is checking the compass in the beam of his flashlight.

HUTCH
We should pitch our tents.

PHIL
That's it, is it? We're giving up on making it back to the town tonight?

HUTCH
Don't see we have a choice Philip.

Another clap of thunder, close by and loud. HUTCH glances up.

LUKE is staying quiet, his eyes are peering out into the night. He shines his torch light on the trees, picking out pale white trunks and vines, and the fat drops of rain that make it through the canopy. Moths flutter about the beam as it is swallowed by the endless forest.

Suddenly he sees something. He stops. PHIL bumps into him.

PHIL
Watch out.

HUTCH turns.

HUTCH
What is it?

LUKE moves forward, following his beam of light.

Something is scratched into the bark of a tree. It's a symbol - old runes.

HUTCH move his torch light up. Picks out other trees further away, also with the ruins scratched into their bark. He moves towards them.

HUTCH squeezes through two trees and suddenly he's in small open clearing surrounded by knee high grass. The rain falls freely onto him.

LUKE and PHIL follow him, DOM comes soon after.

DOM
Lads hold up!

He stops when he looks up. All four torch beams together have penetrated the night and now illuminate what's at the end of the garden.

It’s a little, two story abandoned house.

28 EXT. ABANDONED HOUSE - NIGHT 28

Lightning flashes and thunder rolls above the four men. The rain pounds down.

HUTCH
Come on.

They hurry towards the house. As they get closer their lights pick up more details. The house is two stories, it looks ancient, windows battered shut, no light coming from inside, clearly long deserted.

DOM
No. Fucking. Way.

Above them a fork of lightning cuts through the sky. The thunder is instant and deafening. The storm right above them.

HUTCH
We need to get under cover.

They make it to the front door. HUTCH tries it. It’s wedged shut.

DOM
We can’t just break in.

HUTCH
Help me with this.

PHIL joins him in putting his weight against the door.

LUKE glances back with his torch, picks out the trees behind them.

HUTCH (CONT’D)
Dom...

DOM reluctantly lends his shoulder to the door charge. A few more whacks and the old wood gives way and the men pile in. DOM yelping as his twisted knee takes his weight.

LUKE stays outside, eyes straining into the pitch black. Just him and the forest and the rain.

And then a noise, somewhere out there in the dark. A distant, low, cough. Animal-like. LUKE stares out. HUTCH appears at the door.

HUTCH (CONT’D)
Luke, come in for Christ sake
you’re getting soaked.

LUKE
Did you hear that?

HUTCH
No mate, come on.

LUKE gives one last look outside then turns and enters the house.

29 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - NIGHT 29

The four flashlights pick out the house. It's one big room, with a grungy corner kitchen on one end, a stairway leading upstairs and a fireplace at the other. Tiny runic pendants hang from the ceiling. Bugs scatter under flashlights.

PHIL
Well, this is the house I get murdered in. That much is clear.

HUTCH grins.

HUTCH
It's worse than Halls of Residence, lads.

DOM
Who *lived* here?

LUKE closes the door, they notice that it used to be barred with a thick piece of wood across the frame. The wood is long rotted, and has split in two when the door was pushed open.

LUKE tries to re-bar the door but the wood is useless. He notices that on the wall hangs an old rifle, rusted beyond use.

HUTCH
They were packing, whoever they were.

There's a small window by the door and LUKE goes to it. Looks out into the dark and the rain and the forest.

HUTCH goes to investigate the wood burner at the end.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
Okay, bugger's rusted shut, but it's dry-ish.

He gets out a pen knife and jimmies it open.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
Right chaps, lets get that furniture broken up.

HUTCH and DOM go to the old rickety chairs and table and smashing them up. The noise echoing uncomfortably around the house. LUKE meanwhile takes a discarded chair leg and uses it to bar the front door.

HUTCH (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Probably sensible.

LUKE jumps, and turns to see HUTCH behind him.

LUKE
I don't like this place.

HUTCH
Not too keen on it myself mate. But what's the alternative? Middle of the forest in a lightning storm? 'Lesser of two evils' kind of situation.

LUKE
I really think I heard something out there.

HUTCH
Maybe you did. We're not the only animals in the woods, Lukey.

PHIL, meanwhile, has turned his attention to the stairs.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
Might be stuff to burn up there.

PHIL hesitates.

DOM
Want me to come with you?

PHIL
(defensive)
No.

PHIL exhales and moves towards the stairs.

30 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - STAIRCASE/LANDING - NIGHT 30

PHIL heads up the stairs, taking them slowly, one at a time, each stair depressing under his feet with a loud groan. In the background DOM and HUTCH give a small cheer as HUTCH gets the fire flickering.

He enters the landing.

Two doors lead off from a short, narrow, corridor.

Both doors are open, but PHIL's torch reveals nothing but darkness inside.

He moves closer to the first doorway, and slowly pushes the door open, entering the room --

31 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT 31

PHIL enters the pitch black room. He brings his torch up --

A YELLOW EYE STARES BACK AT HIM! There's something in the bed...

He falls back with a strangled yell.

The torch beam swings wildly. It picks out features - animal eyes, horns, hands, a dress, a coffin. Fuck, fuck, fuck... PHIL backs out of the room.

32 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - STAIRCASE/LANDING - NIGHT 32

PHIL backs out of the room.

PHIL
Fuck!

HUTCH
What is it?!

HUTCH jumps up the stairs but his foot crashes through the first step. LUKE is right after him. Passing into --

33 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT 33

HUTCH shines his torch light up.

LUKE
Jesus Christ.

It's a monster. But not one that's going to hurt anyone. There's an animal head and body, the fur rotted away years ago. It's wearing a little white robe, complete with frills around the throat and wrists.

The hands are the worst bit. Human hands. Mummified, sewn onto the body.

The thing is set up as though it is standing - its body propped up with leather belts holding it in what almost looks like a crude upright coffin.

On the floor by its feet is a carpet of dried, dead flows, littered with the skeletal remains of dozens and dozens of tiny dead animals.

HUTCH
What the hell is it?

LUKE
I think it's a goat.

34 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - NIGHT 34

More wood is stuffed into the wood burner.

The men sit around the fire, in their sleeping bags. HUTCH plays with one of the runic pendants. A camping stove is bubbling away.

HUTCH
Looked like an effigy. Pagan probably. I think whatever it was they worshipped it.
(beat)
Or the thing it represented.

DOM
I thought they worshipped Thor and Odin.

HUTCH
They worshipped all kinds of shit back in the day. Plus if you're getting your image of Nordic mythology from superhero movies I think you'll find the reality to be quite different.

PHIL
Less capes?

HUTCH
This is old Viking country. They raped, pillaged, and murdered. What do you think their gods looked like?

PHIL
We should burn this place down when we leave.

Pause.

LUKE
No. We should just leave quietly.

DOM
As long as we go I don't care how we do it.

HUTCH plays with the pendant.

DOM pours the food into four separate camping plates and hands it around.

DOM (CONT'D)
On a scale of one to slitting my wrists, how fucked are we, Hutch?

HUTCH
We're not fucked. We're fine. Bit of food in your belly and some kip and we'll be alright. Tomorrow we'll find the exit.

DOM
This was a shit idea.

LUKE
If you didn't want to try the shortcut you should have stayed back in the field.

DOM
I had a scout master when I was a kid. He always used to say that if a shortcut was really a shortcut it wouldn't be called a shortcut, it'd be called the route.

There's a pause.

PHIL
Fuck off were you ever in scouts.

DOM
Where'd I get the quote from then? Where'd I get the quote from?

HUTCH
Shut up the lot of you. We have a compass, we have a map, we have supplies. As long as we don't panic, as long as we don't fuck ourselves, we'll be okay.

A beats of silence.

PHIL
I'll give any of you a thousand pounds to spend the night with that thing upstairs.

HUTCH
No thanks.

DOM
My wife would never forgive me.

They look at LUKE.

PHIL
You've woken up next to worse.

LUKE manages a small smile. He lays down, wearily, and closes his eyes.

LUKE
I'm good, thanks.

35 EXT. ABANDONED HOUSE - NIGHT 35

The little house sits in the dark glen. The torrential rain stops, as suddenly as if someone had turned a tap off. A pulse of lightening in the sky.

36 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - NIGHT 36

LUKE lies staring at that tiny window. The lightening still pulsing. Glimpses of jagged tree limbs outside.

Luke's eyes slowly drift into sleep. The lightening flickers across his face and suddenly --

HOLDS BRIGHT

Luke stirs. Covers his eyes - a bright white light pouring through the tiny window from outside. He stands, in his underwear and T-shirt and cautiously creeps toward the door. Turns back to the others --

LUKE
(whispers)
Hutch?

Nothing. Luke pries the front door open to reveal --

37 INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - CONTINUOUS 37

LUKE steps through. An automatic door closing behind him. Ahead of him are aisles of product, half taken over by the forest. Foliage and growth coming up between the floor tiles. The fluorescent lights above flicker and buzz. The pop music from the beginning coming lightly through the speakers.

LUKE suddenly wanders in like it's all completely normal. Walks past the till. No sign of the shop assistant. Vines snake over the conveyor belt. Right up to --

The alcohol aisle. Luke reviews several of the bottles. Grabs the one he wants, but as he looks closer at it a tiny sliver of blood twirls in the clear spirits. In the background, Luke hears someone speaking --

POOL SHARK (O.S.)
I'm not going to ask you again.

Luke turns back to the double doors. Sensing someone - this voice - *something* - coming. After a long beat, looks back in front of him when suddenly --

The entire aisle is RIPPED AWAY from some unseen force! Bottles explode and crash with the impact, but all taking the sound of tree branches breaking. *The giant lumbering crash of something moving through forest!*

38 EXT. ABANDONED HOUSE - DAWN 38

Close on LUKE's face as he gasps. Snaps his eyes open. The dream over. Awake.

He is standing outside.

At the edge of the clearing and right in front of him, like looming aggressors, are the trees of the forest settling back into place. Rustling to stillness. Something huge just tore through in the opposite direction.

LUKE is shivering, confused, scared.

Above him the sky is turning a bruised blue as the sun creeps up.

He looks down. He's in his underwear. Blood slowly pooling underneath his shirt. Three long scratches across his chest. As though something had racked a three clawed hand down his skin.

He begins to back away from the tree line. Someone cries out from the house! Luke turns - running back into -

39 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - DAWN 39

LUKE comes in and freezes.

HUTCH is on the floor by the embers of the dead fire. He is wrapped up in his sleeping bag, almost in the foetal position, clearly having a nightmare. He is muttering to himself, something awful happening to him in his sleep. His body shakes.

LUKE runs to him. Shakes him awake.

LUKE
HUTCH! HUTCH!

HUTCH's eyes open. He cries out. Bursting awake. Clutches his bag and crawls to a sitting position, trying to catch his breath.

HUTCH
What... Where am I?

LUKE
The house.

Hutch looks down to his bag --

HUTCH
It's wet. I'm... What the hell?

He's pissed himself. Luke turns back and surveys the rest of the room. All empty sleeping bags. In that moment we hear it. The sound of a man crying. It's awful.

MOMENTS LATER

Luke turns a corner into the kitchen section. In the darkness is the sound of weeping.

DOM
Gayle? No... no. Fuck... Fucking hell...

LUKE turns his torch on. The light illuminates DOM. He is in the corner. In his underwear. He is moaning, half-conscious - afflicted with a terrible nightmare. He looks into the light. Some sorrowful realization in his eyes.

DOM (CONT'D)
... Luke?

LUKE
Wake up.

Luke looks back to Hutch, now on his feet. Shaking as he tries to put on his pants.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Where's Phil?

40 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - STAIRCASE/LANDING - DAWN 40

LUKE walks slowly up the stairs, scared of what he will find. It's dead silent. Only the creaking of the wood steps.

41 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - ATTIC - DAWN 41

In the glow of his torch, PHIL is lying a few feet from the effigy in the bed which leers down at him with its lifeless eyes. He is completely naked. Kneeling in front of that god awful effigy as though praying. He is sound asleep.

LUKE gets down on the floor next to him, amongst the dead animal skeletons and the dead leaves. He grips Phil's shoulders.

LUKE
(whispers)
Phil... wake up.

Phil's eyes spring open. He stares at LUKE. Tears have made tracks in the dirt on his face. He doesn't say anything at first, gets his breath back.

LUKE (CONT'D)
You're okay. You're okay.

He looks at the effigy. Looks away quickly.

PHIL
What is this? What's happening?

LUKE
I don't know. I have no idea.

42 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - MORNING 42

Phil's fingers are shaking as he tries to tie his boots. He looks up and sees LUKE zip up his jacket, covering his scratches. He doesn't ask about it but he's certainly noted it.

Everyone's mostly dressed. Packing up their stuff silently. DOM is the first one ready.

DOM
(urgent)
Can we hurry the fuck up please?
I want to get out of here.

43 EXT. ABANDONED HOUSE - MORNING 43

LUKE stands out front, the others coming out of the house.

In the light of day they can see what they couldn't last night - that almost all of the trees that surround the perimeter of the clearing are carved with strange runes, all of them clearly done many years ago.

PHIL
They warning us to keep out or
stay in?

DOM pushes out of the house and bumps into LUKE, desperately looking for a direction. LUKE takes notice, DOM driven more curiously pushing harder than the rest.

DOM
Fuck this place.

LUKE
Should we head back the way we came?

HUTCH
And waste a whole day's walking?

PHIL
Guys look at this -

PHIL points to a small break in the trees, and a noticeable path that leads into the forest. DOM turns to the trail.

HUTCH steps forward with the compass. He points thirty degrees away from the path.

HUTCH
South West is this way.

DOM
South West can go fuck itself. You said we should have been out of this forest yesterday.

HUTCH
So it took a little longer than I thought. Storm slowed us down.

PHIL
Right. Dead things hanging in trees and fucked up puppets in spooky houses and the sun setting when it's not bloody supposed to. They all slowed us down.

HUTCH
One creepy night in a forest doesn't mean we were going in the wrong direction. We don't know where that path goes.

DOM
We know it goes somewhere. We know this forest has been getting thicker by the minute ever since you led us in here and my knee can't keep climbing over tree trunks for another twelve hours.

DOM shoulders his rucksack.

DOM (CONT'D)
It's basically pointing in the same direction.
(MORE)

DOM (CONT'D)
Dollars to donuts it leads to a ruddy carpark and a burger van.

PHIL
He could be right.

PHIL follows DOM. LUKE looks at HUTCH.

HUTCH
Okay we try it. For a bit.

They all get going.

44 EXT. FOREST - PATH - DAY 44

The four of them walk in silence. We hang for a beat, listening to the quiet rhythm of their footsteps.

LUKE looks up and takes note of a ridge running along the left of the path.

PHIL
So are we all going to talk about it?

HUTCH
I'd rather not.

PHIL
Rather not? I woke up stark bollock naked in front that thing in bloody tears. Explain that.

HUTCH
It was a nightmare, Phil. We all got spooked last night and we had bad dreams, okay?

LUKE
What was your dream?

HUTCH doesn't answer. DOM shakes his head.

DOM
Give it a rest, mate.

LUKE
You kept saying Gayle. You ever woken up crying like that, Dom?

DOM
My mate Andy's stag do. Had a dodgy Vindaloo and eight lagers, I was in absolute floods the next morning.

LUKE just shakes his head.

PHIL
Well I haven't. And last night I could hear something upstairs. Footsteps. I didn't want to but I had to look. *It* was making me, do you understand? It made me kneel. That thing in the room -

HUTCH
Christ sake, Phil! Listen to yourself. I'm a bit ruddy humiliated about being found in me kegs, covered in piss. Alright? I don't want to psychoanalyse it and I don't want to play fucking make believe. We have real problems to deal with. Like the fact that we have no idea where this bloody path is heading.

A few moments of silence and then DOM speaks.

DOM
Well we know where it's heading away from. And that's good enough for me.

45 EXT. FOREST - PATH - DAY 45

It's raining. A light drizzle.

HUTCH and LUKE walk ahead of the other two. DOM at the back of the line.

HUTCH stops. LUKE catches up with him, sees where he's looking - through a gap in the trees there's another little house, ancient and black and lifeless as the last place.

PHIL and DOM catch up with them. Look at the house. None of them speak. They all carry on.

As they walk, they pass a huge dug out pit in the ground full of various animal bones.

HUTCH
Animal trap.

DOM
Yeah. Great.

46 EXT. FOREST - PATH - DAY 46

HUTCH walks at the head of the group, monitoring his compass. DOM is lagging behind again.

HUTCH
We're going in completely the wrong direction. Five more minutes of this I'm pulling rank.

LUKE
Is it just me or do you also really not want to find out where this path's heading?

HUTCH
It's not just you mate.

LUKE
Which way's South West?

HUTCH
Up that ridge. But I doubt we'll get those two up there.

LUKE
This is ridiculous.

47 EXT. FOREST - PATH - DAY 47

LUKE leads the way, the others follow in silence.

They walk like this for a while, each lost in his own thoughts.

DOM
I need a minute. My knee's killing me.

DOM sits. Somehow retaining his dignity, despite needing a break.

LUKE
You might have to push through the pain barrier a bit, we can't keep going at this pace.

DOM
Screw you, I'm through the pain barrier, I'm in bloody agony here.

LUKE
No you're not, you're uncomfortable, there's a difference.

DOM sits down.

DOM
I didn't realise you were a doctor now.
(MORE)

DOM (CONT'D)
Why don't you give yourself a fucking prostate exam and leave me in peace.

LUKE
Dom, get up.

DOM
No.

LUKE
Dom get the fuck up. I mean it; I want out of these woods.

HUTCH interjects before DOM can retort.

HUTCH
Luke, why don't you scout up the ridge, see if you can see anything?

HUTCH steps away from the others and speaks quietly to LUKE.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
Help me keep this together, mate. Okay?

HUTCH gives LUKE a look - he doesn't want any arguments.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
Just to the top and come right back. Come back with some good news, yeah.

LUKE
Got it.

HUTCH
Don't go far.

LUKE
(sharper)
I got it.

HUTCH presses the compass into LUKE's hand.

HUTCH
Southwest.

LUKE nods, slipping out of his rucksack, taking his water bottle, his pen knife, and a flash light.

48 EXT. FOREST - RIDGE - DAY 48

LUKE moves freely, pleased to be free of the burden of the rucksack and the group. He pushes up the ridge, determined.

He punches at the branches that hang in his path, adrenaline firing him up.

Wet branches claw at his face as the path takes him though ever thicker undergrowth. Reaching the top of the ridge, he's expecting a vista of some sort. But instead he discovers --

49 EXT. DEAD FOREST - DAY 49

Infinite, grey trees.

LUKE looks around. No birds suddenly. Strange feeling of dread. He walks in a little, pushing the limits of his courage.

There's the snap of a branch, somewhere in the trees. LUKE freezes. It's silent. He can hear his breath.

LUKE finds his hand going to his chest. He looks down at the three long scratches that have torn through his skin.

Someone in the forest another branch snaps. And then another.

LUKE snaps to. Stares into the void of trees. Nothing. Then --

SUDDENLY SOMETHING MOVES! Something big. Like the forest undergrowth adjusted itself somehow.

LUKE panics. Takes off and slams into a tree. Gathers himself and hurries back to the edge of the ridge, some primordial sense in his brain telling him he's being followed.

He speeds up, half running, half falling back down towards the path.

50 EXT. FOREST - PATH - DAY 50

LUKE hurries back to the others.

He rounds a corner, can hear talking. He stops, he can see the other three. He stays spying on them for a little while.

They're laughing. Relaxed, relieved, almost enjoying themselves.

HUTCH is smoking a fag. PHIL takes a sip of water, DOM chortles at some offhand comment, whilst he lazily finishes off an energy bar. They look easy in each other's company. LUKE watches them, jealous.

He steps out of the path and they all look up. The laughter stops.

DOM
Here he is.

HUTCH
Find anything?

LUKE takes HUTCH's offered water bottle and takes a sip.

LUKE
There's something up there.

PHIL
What?

LUKE
Something's following us. It's been following us since the house.

DOM
What are you talking about?

HUTCH
What's following us?

LUKE
I don't know. I can just sense it.

DOM
Fucking hell.

HUTCH
I haven't seen anything.

DOM
Can we all not, yeah? Can we just agree to not start losing our fucking shit in here.

LUKE
I'm telling you, there is something out there.

DOM
Shut up.

HUTCH
Guys, come on. Luke, there are animals in the woods but nothing that's going to be tracking us.

LUKE pulls his shirt down slightly, revealing the three scratches on his chest.

LUKE
This happened to me last night. I woke up outside. Something had been near me.

DOM
If you go sleepwalking through a forest you're going to wake up with scratches.

LUKE
Not like this. We need to go back, we need to retrace our steps out.

HUTCH
We'll have lost two days, our food'll be gone and we'll still be miles from the lodge.

LUKE
We have to get out of these woods.

DOM
It's your bloody fault we're in here.

LUKE
Am I the one that fell over my arse and twisted my knee?

DOM
Am I the one that wanted one more drink?!

LUKE almost retorts before he realises what was said.

DOM (CONT'D)
Last time we did what you wanted to do it got one of us killed. Maybe you should wind your neck in.

A moment's silence. He's said the un-sayable.

LUKE
You want to talk about that now?

DOM
Isn't that why we're all here? You got him killed now we need to say goodbye and -

LUKE pushes DOM. DOM falls back on his bad knee with a yell.

HUTCH
Lads!

DOM is back on his feet.

DOM
Now he's got some fight in him! Now he can throw his weight around. Where the fuck was that before? Where was that with Rob? You can attack your mates but not stand up for them?

LUKE
You're not my fucking mate.

DOM
Not anymore I'm not.

PHIL
Guys, Jesus Christ.

LUKE
I did what I could!

DOM
Not a drop of blood on you.

LUKE
What?

DOM
They smashed his head open like a fucking egg and you come out without a drop of blood on you so don't tell me -

LUKE swings and punches him. DOM falls back, shocked. HUTCH jumps in and restrains LUKE.

HUTCH
Woah! Woah! Stop!

DOM
You broke my nose!

LUKE
Fuck you! You have no idea -

HUTCH pushes LUKE away.

HUTCH
You, chill out.
(to DOM)
You, shut up. Your nose isn't broken. You need to lock this shit up the pair of you.
(MORE)

HUTCH (CONT'D)
This is exactly the sort of situation that makes people fall out and this is *exactly* the sort of situation where we need to all be working together.

LUKE and DOM eyeball each other, breathing hard.

LUKE
You have no idea what happened in there.

He heads off along the path. PHIL helps DOM up and gives him a look.

DOM
What?

51 EXT. FOREST - PATH - DAY 51

LUKE walks out in front alone. DOM in the back of the line keeping his distance.

HUTCH notices and catches up with LUKE. Handing LUKE something - an energy bar. LUKE takes it silently. Nods in thanks.

HUTCH
He shouldn't have said all that.

LUKE
He was right. Not a drop on me. I just watched them do it.

HUTCH
No one blames you, mate.

LUKE just looks away. No one blames him more than himself. He watches the ridge, still afraid.

HUTCH looks at the compass. Frowns. He looks at LUKE.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
What got you so spooked up there?

LUKE glances back but doesn't answer. Just keeps on walking.

52 EXT. FOREST - PATH - DAY 52

LUKE and HUTCH watch as DOM and PHIL inch along the trail. Moving at half their original pace. PHIL stops to adjust his shoes. Wincing.

53 EXT. RUINS - DAY 53

A building stood here a long time ago but no there's just a large rectangle of broken stones and discoloured grass.

The four stand before it.

HUTCH looks at a symbol carved onto the front of one of the stones - it's the same pagan image from the pendant Hutch had earlier. They don't know what it means.

HUTCH
Runes on the ruins.

He grins at them. No one else finds it funny.

LUKE notices something on the ground - a splash of red. The others see it too. It could be blood...

HUTCH approaches it cautiously. Squats down, gets his penknife out and stick it in the ground. It bends slightly. He scoops the ground up with his knife. Leaves and dirt falling away as he pulls up something from the forest floor, something red, something that keeps coming, up and up until we see he has pulled up the flattened side of an old, red, camping tent.

They all look at each other.

54 EXT. RUINS - DAY 54

HUTCH ties off the old tent against a tree, so that it now stands reasonably erect.

PHIL is poking around on the ground.

PHIL
I think this was a camping stove.

LUKE looks around in the undergrowth and finds something. The tattered remains of another tent - and a very old rucksack.

LUKE
Got something here.

DOM picks up an old pair of child's walking boots, stiff and mud caked and rotting away - they've been there for years.

HUTCH
Couple of decades old at least,
you reckon?

LUKE opens the rucksack, it's once bright colours faded through time. He roots around, brings out a purse.

HUTCH takes the purse and looks inside. He brings out a small photo. It's of a smiling couple, a man and a woman, and their two children - a boy and girl, around 10 years old. They stand in front of a gleaming new pale blue Volkswagen camper van.

LUKE takes the photo, stares at it. HUTCH continues his exploration of the purse. Finds a credit card, reads it.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
'Anna Eriksen. Expires August 1975.

PHIL
Is this a good sign? Do you think they made it out?

LUKE
And left without their tents, bags and shoes? No, it's not a good sign. Nothing in this forest is a good sign.

HUTCH
Look, we're not going to be these people. You know why? We registered at the lodge, in five hours they're going to report us missing. In five hours and fifteen minutes my wife is going to be on the phone to the British embassy raising merry hell. We're on a path in a woods near a hiking trail. This is where people get found.

PHIL looks up.

PHIL
It'll be dark soon.

55 EXT. RUINS - NIGHT 55

Four tents pitched. DOM is nestled in his, propping up his bad knee. His eyes connect to LUKE's, who watches from the wispy struggling fire. Neither say anything to one another.

HUTCH hands DOM a bowl of hot noodles. Moves over and hands another to LUKE and takes a seat to stoke the fire, heat some more. He opens the final pack of noodles and dumps it in the pan. Looks over to --

PHIL. He's slowly removing his boots and socks. We see huge bloody blisters on his feet. He sits back painfully.

HUTCH counts the remaining energy bars. Not much left. He leans closer to LUKE.

HUTCH
How you doing?

LUKE
Looking forward to the rescue party.

HUTCH forces a chuckle. Nods like it's all okay. He watches as DOM covers his face with a towel and lays back.

HUTCH
(quietly)
He isn't going much farther on that knee. And Phil's not looking great either.

LUKE eats his noodles.

HUTCH (CONT'D)
You're the strongest one. You should try and get out. Get help. I'll stay with those two.

LUKE
That bad, huh?

HUTCH
I think so. I'll set you up in the morning. But take the compass and keep with southwest. GPS is fucking useless.

LUKE nods.

LUKE
Okay.

BEAT.

HUTCH
(nods)
I'm sorry.

HUTCH slaps him on the back - thanks. He heads over to PHIL to check on him. The shadows moving to and fro, the sound of wind whistling between the branches. LUKE shudders.

56 INT. LUKE'S TENT - NIGHT 56

LUKE lies in his tarpaulin cave, his torch hanging from the roof giving off a pool of light.

He's looking through Anna's rucksack. Most of its contents laid out inside his tent. An old mouldy jumper, a rusty thermos flask, a change of clothes. <u>The photo of the family.</u>

He examines it. On the back is written **'ANNA, LARS, SARA and ALDRICK - *To New Adventures!'*.** He examines the photo. The parents are young and strong looking. A handsome pair. The mum has dark hair and wears a bright green jacket. Both children and the father are blonde.

He turns the sack upside down and a bunch of long rotted flowers, the stems entwined with string, the dead petals falling out onto his lap.

LUKE stares at them, and shivers.

57 EXT. RUINS - NIGHT 57

The four men have all retreated into their tents. The rain picks up slightly, the drizzle and the wind conspiring to vanquish the little camp fire. The flames dying with a sizzle. The last light gone.

58 INT. LUKE'S TENT - NIGHT 58

LUKE lies asleep. A noise outside. The crack of branches. Something moving. LUKE opens his eyes.

It takes him a moment for him to realize the sound is real. He lies still, breathing heavily, freaked out.

In his hand is the bunch of dead flowers. He drops them as though they had bitten him.

LUKE's breathing gets harsher. He slowly unzips the tent.

59 EXT. RUINS - NIGHT 59

LUKE looks out of the tent into the darkness.

SUDDENLY, a row of bright fluorescent lights flicker on in the darkness. Hanging suspended from an invisible ceiling. They reveal a surreal tableau - a supermarket in the forest.

To our right the forest seems to form the shape of aisles.

To the left, the long pane of glass that forms the front of the store. The automatic door opens and --

The Pool Shark walks in and faces where LUKE should be. ROBERT is now standing there in his exact place from the beginning. They are some thirty feet from actual LUKE. And now exactly as it happened.

POOL SHARK
You're a fucking dickhead mate.

ROBERT
Alright chaps lets not get silly, ey?

POOL SHARK
Fucking apologise.

A pause for Luke's response.

POOL SHARK (CONT'D)
I'm not going to ask you again.

The Pool Shark smashes the glass across ROBERT'S head. He goes down, clocking his head on the shelving. That awful crack, his skull against hard metal.

The sound of the eight ball rolling. LUKE looks down but sees nothing but dirt. He looks back up and --

The Pool Shark is now looking at LUKE, peeking out of his tent. His eyes are not human, but his pupils are goat-like.

POOL SHARK (CONT'D)
Pick it up.

He begins to stride towards LUKE, faster and faster.

LUKE, terrified, falls back into --

60 INT. LUKE'S TENT - NIGHT 60

LUKE zips it up and clicks off his torch.

The outside of the tent is now illuminated by the mysterious fluorescent lights, a silhouette of the Pool Shark gets closer and closer to the tent and at the very last minute it changes, no longer the silhouette of a man, but the black outline of a creature - a monster. And it passes by making LUKE's tent shake with the force of its body.

LUKE lies in the darkness. His breathing hard and laboured. Scared.

<u>And then he hears a scream.</u>

CUT TO:

61 INT. LUKE'S TENT - NIGHT 61

LUKE jolts awake, forces himself up. Was that real?

The SCREAM comes again. *Very real.* The sound of something huge tearing through the branches. A moment of quiet.

LUKE is frozen in fear for a few moments, eventually managing to force himself into action, stumbling out of the tent into --

62 EXT. RUINS - NIGHT 62

LUKE emerges from his tent and turns his torch light onto the other tents. PHIL is already outside his tent in his underwear. He is on his knees. Babbling nonsensically.

LUKE
Phil!

LUKE shakes him. PHIL wakes with a start.

PHIL
No! ... What? What's happening?

The beam of LUKE's torch light settles on HUTCH's tent and we see that along the side of it are three great rips in the fabric.

LUKE pulls back the tent flap and looks inside - it's empty.

HUTCH's torch lies on its side. His boots in the corner, a half-read guidebook to Sweden next to them. LUKE looks up with his torch and shines a light on the far end of the tent where there are several more long gashes in the material. As though something had raked sharp nails down the canvas.

<u>Blood is splashed on the floor and sides.</u>

LUKE swings his torch around.

LUKE
Where is he?

PHIL
(terrified)
It made me kneel. It made me kneel.

LUKE
Hutch?! HUTCH?!

LUKE rips open DOM's tent. He is inside, curled up into a ball. His eyes tight shut.

DOM
Gayle... Gayle...

LUKE picks up a walking boot and throws it at DOM who wakes with a start.

LUKE
GET UP!

LUKE turns to PHIL.

LUKE (CONT'D)
What did you see?!

PHIL
I don't know, it was... It was dark, it was just shadows.

LUKE
Shadows?

PHIL looks at him. His face pale.

PHIL
They were moving.

63 EXT. DENSE WOODS - NIGHT 63

LUKE pushes through the trees as best he can. Foliage blocking his way, tree trunks close together, obstacles to stumble over in the darkness.

LUKE
HUTCH?!

He's leaving PHIL and DOM behind.

PHIL
Luke wait!

LUKE
HUTCH!

No reply comes. He stops, shinning his torch around, revealing only a thick wall of trees surrounding him. In the distance he can hear PHIL and DOM calling for him.

LUKE (CONT'D)
I'm here!

PHIL and DOM get closer, eventually coming through the trees and joining him. They're in their boots and jackets, holding torches but everything else remains at camp.

PHIL
We need to go back.

LUKE
HUTCH!

Only silence answers them.

LUKE (CONT'D)
HUTCH!

Nothing.

PHIL
Luke we're getting turned around out here!

A scream rings out in the darkness.

DOM
How far away was that?!

LUKE takes off, PHIL and DOM are slower but follow him. LUKE races through the dense brush, desperate.

64 EXT. DEEP FOREST - NIGHT 64

PHIL and DOM struggle through the dark trees. LUKE several metres ahead.

DOM
Wait. Stop.

LUKE carries on.

DOM (CONT'D)
Stop!

LUKE pauses. Looks back at DOM. Everyone catching their breaths.

DOM (CONT'D)
We should go back the camp. If he did anything, he'd go back to the camp.

LUKE and PHIL know he's right. They shine their torches all around.

65 EXT. FOREST - TWILIGHT 65

They walk. LUKE's torch flickers. He hits it on his palm, rattling the battery, bringing it back to life.

He looks around at the trees, shining his light all about him, searching for signs of the tents.

LUKE
Fuck!

PHIL
Should we retrace our steps? Maybe we passed it already.

DOM leans against a tree, resting his knee, trying not to panic.

DOM
Which way? Which way are we even going?!

PHIL
Everything I had was in my pack.

LUKE coughs up a lung.

LUKE
(realising)
Damnit!

LUKE stomps on the ground. A glimpse of inner rage at their situation.

66 EXT. DEEP FOREST - DAWN 66

LUKE, PHIL and DOM walk through the forest, lost.

LUKE looks up. The night is over. HUTCH is lost. He turns off his torch. Defeated.

'Click.'

67 EXT. DEEP FOREST - GULLEY - MORNING 67

The three of them struggle on at a snail's pace. Cold and resigned. More wandering than hiking. Following this random forest grove.

LUKE rounds a corner. He freezes.

HUTCH is in the trees.

He's ahead of them, ten metres or so.

He is propped, Christ like, his feet a metre above head height. His arms outstretched, held up by the branches.

Mostly naked, his pants remain on one leg.

His belly is sliced open, his lower half covered in black viscera. His insides splayed around him.

His eyes are open and they stare lifelessly at his friends as they gather below him.

DOM
No. No, no, no...

DOM is shaking. PHIL's hand is over his mouth in shock.

LUKE is staring at the body. He’s rooted to the spot.

PHIL
Oh God. Hutch.

LUKE backs away from the body, walking until his back hits a tree, making him jump. He leans against it, closes his eyes, terror absolutely taking hold of him.

SNAP! Something breaks behind him. He swings towards a thick knot of trees and shrubs but can see nothing.

Silence. The only sound is the heavy breathing of the three terrified men.

DOM
I want to go home. I want to fucking go home now.

LUKE eyes HUTCH’s body, something shiny - the compass, that hangs on a carabiner from his trousers...

68 EXT. DEEP FOREST - GULLEY - MORNING 68

DOM helps LUKE up, giving him a boost so that he can reach HUTCH’s leg. After a few, sickening, yanks, HUTCH’s ruined body dislodges from the tree and hits the ground with an awful thud, sending them all springing back.

An ugly pregnant beat.

DOM gingerly goes to the body and leans down, gently closes HUTCH’s eyes. He then carefully takes the compass off his pants.

LUKE reaches into his pocket and pulls out HUTCH’S penknife. Stands. All three men look down at their friend.

LUKE
We need get out of here.
(beat)
Now.

DOM
We can’t leave him like this.

LUKE
We don’t have time to bury him Dom. We’ll send someone back for him when we get out.

DOM
Fucking how?! We don’t have the GPS!

As they argue, PHIL quietly sits on the ground and pulls his knees up to his chest.

PHIL
It put him there.

LUKE
What?

PHIL
It knew we would come this way. We were supposed to find him.

DOM points at him.

DOM
Don't fucking fall apart now. Not fucking now. Whoever killed Hutch is in here with us. Probably watching us as we speak. Keep it together, both of you.

69 EXT. DEEP FOREST - GULLEY - MOMENTS LATER 69

LUKE nods. Checking the compass. He begins to climb out of the gulley.

LUKE
This way.

DOM follows. PHIL sits staring at something off screen. He slowly stands up, and makes his way after Luke.

We pan down and reveal --

HUTCH'S BODY. It's been covered with branches and foliage. Off that image --

70 EXT. DEAD FOREST - DAY 70

The infinity of grey trees. Their feet trudge through strange mossy vegetation on the floor. LUKE'S been through here before.

They speak in whispers. Hyper aware someone or something could be watching them.

DOM
What are we going to tell Catherine?

LUKE
I don't know.

DOM
His kids...
(beat)
Who could of done that to him?

DOM spots something, just off the path - it's a big stick, as thick and long as a baseball bat. He picks it up and gives it a practise swing. Uses it as a walking stick.

DOM (CONT'D)
Someone strong. Probably more than one of them.

LUKE looks at PHIL.

LUKE
I don't think it was people.

DOM
Don't start.

LUKE
Phil, you saw something.

PHIL just shakes his head. Unable to answer.

LUKE (CONT'D)
There's something in here with us.

DOM
Probably the fucking pagan hillbillies from the house.

LUKE
No one had lived in that house for a years.

DOM
Their Grandkids then, I don't know.

LUKE
It wasn't pagan hillbillies that made us sleepwalk. Or gave us those nightmares.

DOM
Well whatever or whoever killed Hutch they killed him for sport. So let's argue about it later, when we've got out of these bastards woods, okay?

LUKE nods.

71 EXT. DEAD FOREST - DAY 71

PHIL is moving one miserable step at a time. Nothing but infinite grey trees all around him. This place is dizzying.

DOM licks his dry parched lips. Rubbing his hands together.

LUKE walks on his own. Gripping the compass tight.

72 EXT. RAVINE - DAY 72

We push up through the richness of the deep forest finding LUKE and DOM, standing, looking down on a ravine nestled under the canopy of trees.

DOM
It can't be done.

LUKE
This is the way we have to go.

DOM
Maybe you just brought us this way to have an excuse to go on your own.

LUKE looks at him. Then he checks behind them.

LUKE
(calling)
Phil?

DOM
You think I didn't hear you and Hutch talking? You were going to go.

LUKE
I was going to go and get help.

DOM
You'd have left us. You wanted to leave us before we even got in these woods.

LUKE
I was going to get help.
(calling, stressed)
Phil!

DOM
H would have got help. You'd have just left us.

LUKE glares at DOM.

LUKE
The only way on is through this ravine. So can you do it?

DOM glares right back at him.

DOM
Yes.

LUKE
For real?

DOM
Yes for fucking real.

LUKE
Good. Phil where the fuck are you?

PHIL comes out of the trees behind them, exhausted, out of breath. He doesn't answer.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Stick with us, okay?

PHIL
(mutters)
Safety in numbers.

LUKE throws DOM a look.

LUKE
Right.

73 EXT. RAVINE - DESCENT - DAY 73

The men follow the path as it descends down a steep valley. DOM winces as he slips and slides down the perilous hill side.

LUKE helps PHIL down a tricky section. PHIL finally gets his footing. He has to stop to rest.

PHIL
It's in my head. That thing, in my dream...

DOM
I can't hear this now.

PHIL
I can't stop seeing it. I was on my knees but it wasn't going to be enough, I knew it wasn't. It was still going to take me.

DOM
Just shut up! Shut the fuck up. You're wasting energy.

DOM marches off as best he can.

PHIL
(scared)
What did you dream about, Luke?

LUKE just looks at him, doesn't answer. They trudge on.

74 EXT. RAVINE BED - DAY 74

LUKE licks his tongue over dry, cracked lips.

He looks around. A way away he spots something - some ferns, brighter green and more lush than the rest of the forestry.

LUKE
Wait.

DOM and PHIL stop, exhausted.

LUKE heads over to the ferns. The air ahead of him is heavy with tiny bugs.

LUKE pushes through.

His feet start to suck through mud. He breaks through the foliage and stops - in front of him is a little pool of stagnant looking water. He falls to his knees and scoops water into his mouth, gagging on the taste at first, but still drinking.

DOM and PHIL push through. Without a word they sink down and drink.

LUKE rubs water over his face.

He looks up.

On the other side of the stream are a set of footprints, leading out into the forest.

An old rusted bucket, half buried in the mud. Signs of life.

PHIL and DOM notice them too. The euphoria of finding water is replaced with a dark tension, and the realization that they aren't watching their backs. LUKE stands, unsteadily, penknife in hand.

DOM
See? People.

75 EXT. RAVINE - ASCENT - DAY 75

The men crawl up the other side of the ravine. Inch by inch they move at an exhausted pace.

76 EXT. RAVINE ASCENT - DAY 76

We're with LUKE. Endless grey trees around him. Up ahead, he spots the end of the dead forest...

rich mountain growth runs right up against it in a near perfect line. He hears DOM right behind him.

DOM
(whispering)
It should never have happened.

LUKE
What?

He turns back. But DOM is nowhere to be found. Just an empty sea of grey trees. LUKE hangs there. After a beat --

DOM and PHIL emerge from between the trees. DOM struggling with his stick. The knee hurting bad but he's slightly outpacing PHIL.

LUKE looks back into the deep lush forest ahead. He waits.

77 EXT. RAVINE - ASCENT - LATER 77

They walk. Asleep on their feet. Beyond weak.

LUKE stops, resting against a tree. Waiting for the others. He takes a moment to scan the forest in the darkening light.

He looks up the ravine, towards the crest of the hill. The trees are silhouetted up there, some of them forming a distinctive shape in the half light. LUKE changes his focus and when he looks back the pattern is different. *Something has moved.* He strains his eyes but its just forest up there. Perhaps he imagined it.

Perhaps he's going mad.

PHIL (O.S.)
Is it still following us?

<u>LUKE jumps.</u>

PHIL standing behind him. LUKE just looks at him, grimly.

LUKE
I don't know.

DOM is a starting to catch up.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Come on.

78 EXT. DEEP FOREST - BIG TREE - DAY 78

Still walking. Walking forever it seems. LUKE stops, rests against a tree, catching his breath.

PHIL and DOM stumble up behind him. Collapse. Luke slowly slides down to sitting position.

No one says anything. They're completely spent.

79 EXT. FOREST - BIG TREE - DUSK 79

We're looking up at this massive spruce. The jagged branches are thicker than the others, running all the way down to the ground. The top seems to breach the forest canopy.

LUKE stares at it. Finally turns groggily toward PHIL, who sits nearby with his head down and his back to LUKE.

LUKE
(whispers)
Phil.

PHIL doesn't answer.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Phil.

PHIL
(not turning round)
huh?

LUKE
I'm going to climb that tree. See what I can see.

PHIL nods, almost imperceptibly. DOM looks up.

DOM
What?

LUKE stands and, with all his effort, hauls himself up. Stumbles to the edge and grabs hold of the first branch.

DOM watches him, eyes glazed with exhaustion.

Luke pulls himself up a notch. Fumbles for footing and continues.

80 EXT. BIG TREE - UPPER - TWILIGHT 80

Each dry old branch cracks a bit as it takes his weight.

LUKE is sweating and panting. His fingers are torn to shreds against the aging bark. He looks back down to DOM and PHIL. Their coloured jackets standing out against the darkening forest far below.

LUKE reaches for a higher branch.

81 EXT. BIG TREE - CANOPY - TWILIGHT 81

LUKE emerges through the evergreen canopy. Positioning himself against the trunk he leans back. At this height the whole tree sways just a bit.

He takes a breath and absorbs the spectacular view. The forest that is laid out before him, vast and shrouded in mist in the dying light. Directly in front of him, he sees it -

Several fire lights in the forest, far in the distance. Beyond them, the trees stop against the vague grey promise of open fields.

A smile breaks out on his face. He brings up the compass, checks the direction they need to head in - South West.

LUKE
Hutch was right.

He calls out, his voice cracking.

LUKE (CONT'D)
I can see it! I can see the end!

His call echoes below him. Followed by silence.

LUKE (CONT'D)
I can see the end!

Met with more silence. And then there's a sound, carried on the air. A heavy thump below. A smaller spruce shakes.

A flock of birds is disturbed, fifty metres away.

Luke positions himself and carefully steps down.

82 EXT. BIG TREE - UPPER - TWILIGHT 82

Ducking under the canopy, LUKE looks down at the dizzying drop to the forest floor below. Already almost totally in shadow from the quickly setting sun.

LUKE
(hisses)
Dom? Phil?

There's no reply.

WHOOSH

The sound of a body moving through the undergrowth.

LUKE shimmies down a few metres, still very high up. He strains his eyes in the rapidly darkening gloom.

A light, down below - all we can make out is the beam of a torch moving as the person holding it runs.

PHIL (O.S.)
(stage whisper)
Dom!

LUKE freezes up. Suddenly, unable to move. Something spine tingling about that flashlight. Phil's horror and uncertainty coming through. It's shaking in his hand.

A heavy THUD. Something tearing through the wood. Unseen.

PHIL (CONT'D)
(yelling)
Oh Jesus! Please no... !

WHUMP!

His flashlight beam is *yanked* backwards incredibly fast. His scream pierces the night.

LUKE shuts his eyes. Whimpers against the tree.

A guttural cry of pain. Then it cuts off with a wet smack and the forest turns horribly, terrifyingly, quiet.

The torch light beam stops moving and rests on the ground twenty metres away. Something has covered it so that the light now shines red.

LUKE looks down, aghast. He dares not move. Dares not make a sound.

There's an extremely long pause. Dead silent.

LUKE is gripping the tree. His breathing becomes faster, beads of sweat appearing on his forehead. He's trying to fight his body's rising anxiety. The terror and panic that is swirling around in his guts and his head. His fingers grasp the bark, nails cracking and bleeding.

Something big moves somewhere near the bloody torch light and stops. Closer now to Luke.

He's high enough above it. *Or is he?*

Uncertain, his breathing seems to be too loud. He spots another hefty branch on the opposite side of the tree. He decides to make a go for it, lifting off his existing support with a slight -

CRACKING SOUND

He positions his foot on the hefty branch. Tests the sturdiness. Takes a beat. And LUKE shifts his weight when --

His branch bursts.

CRACK. LUKE drops! Crashing into multiple branches. Wood splinters against his face. His hands. Whacking against bark.

Straight down. Flailing. Colliding with --

83 INT. SUPERMARKET - ALCHOHOL AISLE - NIGHT 83

LUKE slams into the supermarket floor! This time SMACKING his head against the tile. *Crying out.* Opening his eyes in time to see --

ROBERT taking the glass in the face.

LUKE watching him go down. Blood beginning to trickle down his own face into his eyes.

Suddenly silence.

The eight ball rolls across the floor and bumps against LUKE's knee. LUKE just stares at it. His own blood dripping onto the floor. We hang on the image longer than before.

POOL SHARK (O.S.)
Pick it up.

LUKE looks back up. Stares into the Pool Shark's face. The harsh fluorescent lighting behind him. Set against the darkness of the forest beyond it. The faint outline of Spruce.

POOL SHARK (CONT'D)
Pick it up.

LUKE picks up the eight ball. The Pool Shark holds out his palm.

POOL MAN
Give it to me.

LUKE, dumbfounded, hands him the eight ball.

The Pool Shark looks down at him. Enjoying his power.

ROBERT moans some awful sound.

The Pool shark's friends panic. Grabbing him and pushing him out of the store.

LUKE watches ROBERT's final moments. ROBERT tries feebly to crawl away. Not understanding his assailant is gone. He wiggles across the floor, helpless and desperate before running into a nearby shelf and settling to his death.

LUKE stares wide open. Scarred forever. After a moment --

LUKE
(finding his voice too late)
Hey... ! HEY!

He tries to get to his feet. To go after them but --

He slips against the earth. Soft mud where the tile once was. LUKE falls backwards. His hands hit the floor and come away muddy, covered in leaves and scratches.

There's an animal roar in the distance.

84 EXT. DEEP FOREST - BIG TREE - NIGHT 84

The animal roar which began in the last scene ends in this one. It's a way off. But close enough to frighten...

Visually it's now very clear where he is. LUKE's lying on the ground after a nasty fall. Blood dried to his face. *How long was he out?*

He manages to flip onto his back and look around.

The trunk of the big tree has fresh scratches in it. As though something past underneath and clawed at it with blades.

About twenty metres away he can see the beam of light from the dropped torch. The beam stained red.

LUKE forces himself up and staggers towards it. One foot after another. A stumbling mess he finally grabs the bloody torchlight. Out in the darkness --

<u>The sound of something moving.</u>

LUKE freezes. Silence returning to the forest.

He inches forward. The only sound is the breath in his lungs, the heart beat that pounds in his chest. Jumping at every twig snapping under foot or bird call in the trees.

He steers the torch light across the woods. Every faint outline captured. Shadows of the trees casting upward upon one another. The torch shaking in his hand when --

Something grabs him by the ankle!

He lets out a strangled yell; spins, kicking, panicking, pen knife drawn. His torch picks out DOM, pale faced, terrified. He is curled up in the hollow space inside a dead stump.

LUKE
Oh fuck. Jesus Christ, you're alive!

DOM
Shhhhhh..... !

LUKE hushes, crawls in with him.

85 INT. DEAD STUMP - NIGHT 85

LUKE switches off the torch. Together they sit. Breathing hard. *They whisper.*

LUKE
Phil?

DOM
No.
(pause)
We heard something coming. He started run...

LUKE
What did you see?

DOM
I don't know. A shadow.
(beat)
It was fast.

LUKE
It's hunting us.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Fuck me. I thought that was it.

DOM
I thought I was alone. I don't want to die alone.

LUKE
I won't leave you.

DOM
I won't blame you if you did.

LUKE
I'm *not* leaving you.

LUKE looks at DOM - intently. DOM nods.

BEAT. They stare out into the forest. Both exhausted. The sound of the forest settling around them.

DOM
Do you think it's going to come back?

LUKE
Yes.

Long pause. Their heart rates slowing.

DOM
You're busted up pretty bad.

LUKE
I can't even feel it.

DOM
That's good.

LUKE strains his eyes. Swears he can see movement ahead. A tiny crack in the distance. *Could that be it?*

LUKE
Can you move your leg?

DOM
No idea.

Silence for a few moments.

LUKE
I think we have to run.

DOM
(exasperated)
Okay... in a minute.

Out in the forest there's the *rustle* of movement. Something is circling them.

LUKE
We have to go now, Dom.

86 EXT. DENSE FOREST - NIGHT 86

DOM and LUKE stumble on. One torchlight. One pen knife. Nothing else. They push on, both of them injured and stumbling, exhausted, arm in arm at their wits end.

Something is approaching. LUKE's ears prick up, he looks around, there is definitely the sound of footsteps coming from behind. He turns, penknife ready. DOM whimpers.

DOM
Oh Jesus.

Out in the trees something runs, circling LUKE and DOM. We hear the body crashing through the undergrowth. LUKE spins to follow the noise.

DOM (CONT'D)
Oh Jesus please...

LUKE
Dom come on. *Come on!*

LUKE grabs DOM and together they move as fast as possible.

They push through the thick forest, branches whipping at their faces and hands. Their torches waving back and forth.

Behind them something follows.

DOM
Oh fuck me, fuck me, fuck me...

LUKE glances back. He sees something in the darkness. A shadowy shape. LARGE HORNS. Bursting through the undergrowth.

LUKE
Keep going!

DOM is hobbling and crying, every step on his ruined knee agony.

They move forward and then suddenly they trip --

87 EXT. DENSE FOREST - STEEP HILL - NIGHT 87

LUKE and DOM slip down it. Breaking through the underbrush. Landing in a heap at the bottom. Into --

88 EXT. DENSE FOREST - PATH - NIGHT 88

A second to gather themselves. They're on the path from before. Better kept here, small wood posts line the edge.

LUKE steers his torch to the left. Upward into the trees. He sees it first.

LUKE
Damnit, no.

DOM looks up.

It's PHIL. In a tree ahead of them. Up against the trunk, his back is to them. His clothes have been completely ripped off. His abdomen impaled forcefully on a huge broken tree branch. Blood and entrails run down the trunk into a pool of remains on the ground.

DOM
Phil...

LUKE
Leave him.

DOM
I have to see.

LUKE
No!

DOM
Phil...

DOM goes to move closer to PHIL, but LUKE pulls him back.

LUKE
Dom we need to fucking go!

Spins him in the other direction. Down the other side of the trail. Up ahead we can see --

Lights. Flames. Far in the distance ahead of the trail.

DOM and LUKE take off, hobbling arm in arm toward the light.

Nearby, up the hill, something huge makes a break through the dense brush. Running parallel. Trying to cut them off.

LUKE and DOM move as quickly as they can. As they run objects appear in the trees above them. Animal carcasses, strung up like the elk and like Hutch and PHIL in the branches. Some are ancient - just old bones, some are newer. Some look suspiciously human.

Behind them the thing that is chasing them picks up speed.

LUKE and DOM reach the point of light - a flaming torch, stuck in the ground. They pass it, and we see that ahead is another torch, and beyond that more...

They pass them, following the lights...

Suddenly the air around them seems to be thicker, tendrils of smoke are caught in the beams of torch light.

They keep running.

The creature is tracking them, overtaking them, running parallel, the trees moving and shaking.

Ahead of them we can see the forest breaks into a clearing. They push for it. The pursuer curving back in, looking to intercept them. It’s going to be close...

89 EXT. VILLAGE CLEARING - NIGHT 89

LUKE and DOM burst out of the forest. They pass between two burning torches. We go with them as they break away from the tree line.

We expect something to follow them out, some creature to burst forth from the trees but... Nothing. The forest falls silent.

DOM almost collapses, looking back fearfully at the tree line. LUKE drags him.

LUKE
Come on...

Closer now they can make out a little community in the darkness. Three or four houses - old wooden buildings like the first abandoned house. Various states of disrepair, one of them half caved in. The clearing is ringed with burning torches, the forest surrounding it on all sides.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Help!

LUKE drags DOM towards the biggest house, solid black, two stories.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Anyone?! Help us!

They get to the door. DOM's knee finally gives way. LUKE is practically holding him up.

LUKE yells incomprehensibly! In the forest, the sound of an animal roaring blends with his voice. *Did we just hear that?*

LUKE bangs on the door, but it's open. Drifting wide.

90 INT. BLACK HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT 90

LUKE and DOM collapse inward. Landing on the floor. LUKE pulls DOM in on top of him.

He glimpses the room. Dilapidated. Dark. A small kitchen in the corner.

And then LUKE sees her - an OLD WOMAN. At least ninety years old. She sits in the corner of the kitchen with her back to them. Still. Dead?

LUKE turns. Trying to kick the door shut. Still fearful of what's out there. Jamming it shut finally.

He falls to his back. Feels his head where the welt from the wound he got falling out of the tree has begun to rise up. He vomits, then spins to his stomach.

And the last thing he sees before he slips into unconsciousness is the OLD WOMAN *slowly turning her head to look at him.*

BLACK.

91 INT/EXT. VARIOUS - DAY/NIGHT 91

A series of images. Flashbacks. Visions. The workings of LUKE's exhausted, damaged, mind.

- LUKE is carried, half unconscious, through a dark corridor.

- Hands grip him.

- He's laid down on a hard bed.

- LUKE remembers pillows, duvets. Coffee brewing in a kitchen. Traffic noises outside.

- HUTCH hangs in a tree. Lifeless eyes.

- ROBERT on his knees.

ROBERT
Please...

- Water is trickled into LUKE's mouth

- Running through the woods.

- The effigy in the first house.

- Blood on a white supermarket floor.

POOL SHARK (V.O.)
Pick it up.

- An abandoned bloody flashlight casts a red beam through the trees.

- Candles blowing out around ROBERT's shrine.

- DOM standing over the shrine in the highlands.

DOM (V.O.)
(pointedly)
It should never have happened.

92 INT. BLACK HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY 92

LUKE comes to. Bandage on his head. Tight on his face.

LUKE
What?

DOM (O.S.)
(groggy)
Huh?

LUKE
What should never have happened?

The room becomes clear. It's small. Bare. DOM is in a bed on the other side of the room. He looks like hell on earth. He looks over at LUKE.

DOM (O.S.)
None of this shit, mate.

LUKE
(weak)
Is this hospital?

DOM (O.S.)
I don't think so.

LUKE looks around, sees the room around him.

He tries to sit up but realises --

His hands are bound to the bed. DOM's in the same predicament. LUKE yanks against his restraints.

DOM (CONT'D)
Somebody put us here.

LUKE looks over to the wall, a small window cut next to his bed. The distant sound of wood chopping. Daylight streaming through.

LUKE
HEY! HEY!

DOM
(stage whisper)
Shhh, don't yell.

LUKE
Why not?

A knock. Something walking on the floor above them. DOM looks up. Panic anxiety in his eyes.

DOM
Who exactly are you hoping is going to come in here?

Another sharp knock on the ceiling.

LUKE
What is that?

DOM
It's been going all morning. There's someone up there.

LUKE registers more wood chopping and voices outside. He leans over and manages to look through the little window.

DOM (CONT'D)
Can you see anything?

LUKE POV: He can see glimpses of people moving. All in their 40s, 50s, 60s. A BALD MAN, SMALL MAN and a FIDGETY WOMAN. They're all dressed in hiking gear from different eras stretching back to the beginning of the 20th century up to more modern fare.

A rusted old 1900's Ford sits half grown into the forest. The only colour comes from several nylon tents (again, from different eras) which have been fastened together and strung up to form a makeshift roof over the collapsed building.

Several of the villagers are constructing something from wood. It looks like a big crucifix with the top pillar missing. A giant 'T.'

LUKE
They're building something.

DOM
Who are *they*?

LUKE
I don't know. There's a bunch of them. Old.

Another knock from upstairs. DOM flinches every time.

As LUKE looks out, one of the people suddenly turns. A frail Scandinavian man in his mid 50s with a full beard and a rusty old axe slung over his shoulder. This is EGGPER. He looks right at LUKE.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Oh fuck.

DOM
What?

LUKE
They -

SOMETHING STEPS IN FRONT OF THE WINDOW!

LUKE flinches back. It's an animal. A skull, antlers... It passes by the frame of the window.

DOM
What was that?! What's going on?!

LUKE
I don't know.

We hear the sound of a door opening and slamming. Immediate, heavy footsteps approach through a room outside theirs.

The footsteps turn down an adjacent corridor and march right up to their door. The sound of a heavy wooden bar being removed and then the door swings wide open.

A man marches in. This is FENRIS. On his head he wears a deer skull mask with protruding antlers. Around his shoulders, tied like a cape, he wears DOM's jacket. He is in his 50s, could be 60. Gaunt, wiry and strong looking. His eyes angrily peer out from behind the mask. He stands looking at them. Moments later EGGPER appears behind him.

LUKE and DOM look at them. It's tense.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Listen...

FENRIS barks several words at LUKE and DOM. He turns to EGGPER and barks something at him. EGGPER leaves the room.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Whoever you are, untie us.

After a beat, FENRIS removes the mask. His eye sockets are hollow. Unhealthy. He glares at Luke. Marches across the room and pulls back LUKE's shirt, regards his claw marks.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Let us go.

FENRIS looks at him and strolls back to the door. Regarding LUKE with envious eyes.

DOM
Forget it mate this prick isn't listening.

EGGPER returns. With him is a woman in her 40s. She has blonde hair and wears an old green jacket. Cautious and forlorn. This is SARA.

EGGPER holds a wooden bowl, in it is a red liquid - looks like blood.

FENRIS speaks to SARA. She looks at LUKE with fearful eyes.

SARA
(translating)
Fenris. Thurstrian sage, devout enemy of Odin, welcomes you --

DOM
You speak English?

FENRIS backhands DOM.

LUKE
Hey!

FENRIS speaks to SARA harshly. She stammers a little. Seems nervous.

SARA
... Fenris welcomes you to the last Ironwood forest. You have been chosen by last of the Jutnor for the gift of life, beyond your natural death. She asks only for worship.

LUKE and DOM look at each other, fearfully.

FENRIS speaks again in his natural tongue. SARA looks at LUKE - looks at the scratches on his chest.

SARA (CONT'D)
(translates)
The God of the forest wants only one of you.

FENRIS dips three fingers into the bowl that EGGPER holds and then brings them down on DOM's face - leaving three bloody lines running from his forehead to his chin. He continues to speak.

SARA (CONT'D)
(translates - to DOM)
You will be given. A sacrifice for her pleasing.
(to LUKE)
You will kneel before her and receive her gift of life.

LUKE
Wait, no, sacrifice? Stop, hey!

FENRIS and EGGPER ignore him and turn and walk out. SARA hesitates a beat and then follows them.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Hey!

The door is closed and barred from the outside.

DOM whimpers.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Hey!

LUKE turns and looks out of the window. The villagers return to putting together the large wooden pole by the edge of the forest. One of them chops wood.

Chop. Chop. Chop.

The sound of chopping mixes into --

93 INT. BLACK HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY 93

Knock. Knock. Knock on the ceiling... LUKE lies, his mind racing. Pulling at his binds. He looks around the room. More knocks from the room above them. He pulls at the binds again.

LUKE
I can't get out of these ropes.

He looks over. DOM is trying to rub free of his binds.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Dom, we'll figure out a -

DOM
(interrupting)
There's a fray, in the rope on my right hand, do you see it?

LUKE
Yeah.

DOM
I can cut through that. I need something sharp.

LUKE looks around - on the wall near his head a shard of wood is half broken off. He leans up to it, gets it between his teeth and yanks his head back. He comes away with jagged splinter of wood, about three inches long, one inch thick. Sharp at one end.

He now has to carefully manoeuvre the splinter from his mouth to the hand tied down by his side. He spits the splinter onto his chest and wriggles it down to his arm, working it agonisingly to his palm. Finally he has it in his fingers.

DOM (CONT'D)
Okay, okay, now throw it to me.

LUKE only has a little movement in his hand. He does a few practise goes, and then throws it...

The splinter lands about halfway between their beds. A pitiful toss.

DOM (CONT'D)
Fuck.

They sit breathing for a beat. Staring at it.

Above them something bangs on the floor again. They both look up. What is it?

CLANK. The bedroom door is suddenly unbarred. DOM and LUKE settle. It opens to reveal EGGPER, he escorts in the old woman, let's call her the WITCH.

She is ancient. She carries a jug of water and a bowl of wrinkled vegetables. She goes to LUKE, pours water into his mouth. He can't help but drink desperately. Then she feeds him vegetables.

She then pulls down his shirt. Looks at the scratches on his chest. Runs her finger along the wounds.

EGGPER mumbles something in their language.

She straightens up and pulls down her own loose smock revealing -- three scars running down her chest, just like LUKE's. He stares at them, horrified.

She turns her attention to DOM. Looks him over. The water sloshing in the jug. But she doesn't give him any.

DOM (CONT'D)
(weakly)
Please?

She keeps her eyes on him and pushes the rest of the vegetables into her almost toothless mouth and chews.

LUKE
What are you doing?!

She looks at LUKE. Says something in the old language.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Give him some.

She smiles lightly at LUKE. Rises to her feet. Her and EGGPER quietly exit, leaving the door cracked open.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Hey! HEY! Get back here!

DOM buries his disappointment. Shakes it off.

LUKE shakes in his bed. Rips at his constraints.

DOM
Luke... Don't. It's not going to do any good.

LUKE catches his breath.

DOM (CONT'D)
The best thing you can do --

BOOM! The door flies open again. EGGPER and the BALD MAN come in. They untie Dom and pull him awkwardly to his feet.

LUKE
Dom! Dom...

DOM struggles against them, but he's got nothing. He's dragged out of the room into --

94 INT. BLACK HOUSE - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS 94

We follow DOM out, where he's pushed to his knees. The SHORT MAN man joins them, re-tying DOM's hands behind his back.

DOM glances down the hallway.

The WITCH stands there looking back at him. Silhouetted against the backdrop of the main room.

DOM knows this isn't good.

The three pagans pull Dom to his feet awkwardly, hands bound behind his back as they spin him around to the other side of the hallway and march him forward into darkness.

In the background, we can hear LUKE's protest.

They march DOM to the end of the hall, turn him towards --

95 INT. BLACK HOUSE - STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS 95

They begin to ascend. We following them up. *Building in anticipation we cut to --*

96 INT. BLACK HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 96

LUKE is arching up in the bed, pulling against his constraints. He can hear DOM being led up the stairwell.

LUKE
Dom?

The sound of a door opening. Something of a gasp from DOM.

THUMP. THUMP. THUMP.

Something banging on the ceiling.

DOM (O.S.)
Oh Jesus, god no...

More THUMPS from the ceiling. Someone walking across it from where DOM yells. Another THUD. A groan. *Dom being pushed to his knees.*

LUKE stairs at the ceiling. Tiny bits of dust raining down between the floorboards.

A shuffle of movement. The muffled sound of crying and then --

DOM screams in terror and pain.

LUKE
DOM! DOM!

The screaming carries on. The banging returns. Tiny bits of dust raining down from the ceiling onto LUKE.

LUKE (CONT'D)
DOM!

LUKE breaks down, his angry yells turning to sobs. Someone comes in. He looks through tearful eyes. It's SARA. She wordlessly sinks to her knees by the side of the bed and puts her hands over his ears. He stares at her, not sure what to make of this act of kindness.

97 INT. BLACK HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON 97

LUKE lies half awake.

BOOM. Suddenly the sound of the door being unbarred. It creaks open. EGGPER, the BALD MAN, and the SMALL MAN push DOM into the room and sit him on the bed. His head down in a heap.

They quickly bind him and exit.

LUKE looks at DOM - aghast. His face and neck are lacerated with scratches, as though he's been clawed out by a thousand tiny animals. His eyes bruised and swollen.

LUKE
(aghast. Under his breath)
Dom...

DOM stares at the ceiling.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Dom what happened?

Knock. Knock. Knock.

DOM
I'm going to die, Luke.

LUKE
No mate.

DOM
I never told you about my dream.

He rolls his jaw. It hurts to talk.

DOM (CONT'D)
I was there, in that abandoned house. I couldn't move. I was held, against the floor... By these hands... Dead hands. Gripping me. And I saw Gayle. I saw my wife. She was there. Calling to me but I was right there trying to get to her but I couldn't. She couldn't find me.
(beat)
That's when I knew I was never getting out of these woods.

BEAT. LUKE just taking it in. DOM readjusts his painful body, forcing himself to look up at LUKE.

DOM (CONT'D)
But you are. You're going to fight.

LUKE
I can't.

DOM
You fucking can and you fucking will.

LUKE
Dom, I...

DOM
You're going to fight. You're going to leave this place and you're going to burn it to the ground behind you. Do you understand me?

LUKE has tears in his eyes. Shakes his head slightly.

LUKE
I let Robert die.

DOM
It's not on you.

Luke falls apart.

LUKE
I'm sorry.

DOM
Don't fucking apologise for living. Not when our friends are dead. You go on living. You go on surviving. Don't you fucking dare stop now. We've all got families. My wife will be waiting for me.
(MORE)

DOM (CONT'D)
You tell her I tried to come back to her. And you look my sons in the eye and tell them their dad died on his feet.

98 EXT. VILLAGE CLEARING - SUNSET 98

DOM is walked out of the house by EGGPER, the BALD MAN and the SMALL MAN. FENRIS leads the way.

We're now clearly see the little village in the dying light.

Up ahead, SARAH, THE WITCH and the FIDGETING WOMAN stand near the wooden offering stake at the edge of the forest.

99 INT. BLACK HOUSE - BEDROOM - DUSK 99

LUKE watches it all from the window.

100 EXT. OFFERING STAKE - CONTINUOUS 100

DOM is tied to the stake by FENRIS who talks to him as he does so.

SARA
(translates)
A man run from her once. She catch him. Keep him in trees, alive. He stays with her a long time. We hear his screams every night. Many moons. Terrible.

FENRIS grins at DOM who is pale faced. SARA looks sick at the memory of what FENRIS is describing. FENRIS looks back at EGGPER who steps forward. He has an a small axe in his hand. He brings the blunt edge down on DOM's toes, smashing them. DOM sobs and grimaces and struggles to hold his head up.

FENRIS looks at him, smirking. He speaks.

SARA (CONT'D)
(translates)
It is best you do not try escape.

Now that DOM is secured to the stake, the villagers back away about ten metres, watching him, flaming torches in hand.

DOM looks up at the trees that tower over him. The foliage waving in the wind. The rustle of the trees.

101 INT. BLACK HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT 101

LUKE stares at the shape of DOM against the moonlight. After several beats, he notices DOM moving. We faintly hear DOM talking.

102 EXT. OFFERING STAKE - NIGHT - LATER 102

DOM is breathing heavily, turning back as he looks to villagers.

DOM
Why don't you just do it already?

The villagers just watch, standing stock still, withered flaming torches in hand.

DOM (CONT'D)
Fuck you! Just get on with it if you're going to do it.

There's a creak in the forest. He looks back at the tree line.

Behind him the villagers, as one, sink to their knees in worship. Spreading their arms across the earth. A specific prostrate position for praise. A sense also of fear amongst them. Whatever's coming is terrifying to them.

We focus on SARA. She closes her eyes. Tries to shut it out.

DOM searches the trees.

Movement deep in the dark forest. Cracking sound of something moving through the brush. IT. The thing pushing toward him.

DOM holds to face it.

The branches part. Something coming -- from the darkness --

A woman. Confused and forlorn. *Like she's looking for something.*

DOM (CONT'D)
(astounded)
Gayle?

GAYLE
Dom?

She walks towards him, looking around.

DOM
Gayle! Gayle please... ?

GAYLE
Dom? Where are you?

103 INT. BLACK HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT 103

LUKE shoves closer to the window. Now from his vantage, DOM yells at nothing but the woods. It's all in his head.

104 EXT. OFFERING STAKE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS 104

GAYLE wanders up to DOM.

DOM
It's me. I'm here. It's me.

She looks through him. Not at him.

DOM (CONT'D)
Please, Gayle. See me...

Her gaze moves up. Up and up above him. Her eyes widen. She SCREAMS. DOM recoils and turns.

Behind him there's just trees. And darkness. He looks back - GAYLE is gone. DOM is crying, confused, scared.

DOM (CONT'D)
Gayle?

Behind him the forest moves.

A tree bends in the middle like a knee.

But it's not a tree. It's a leg. DOM hears it. Knows it's there. It's been there the whole time.

It begins to circle in front of DOM. His eyes transfixed on it's form but we do not see.

105 INT. BLACK HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT 105

LUKE's eyes are wide. Watching from afar. We push in on the window just as - the silhouette of the beast steps in front of DOM, towering over him.

LUKE's eyes lock on the beast. Now he knows what he's been so fucking afraid of.

106 EXT. OFFERING STAKE - NIGHT 106

We stay on DOM's face. <u>He stares up into it.</u> The sound of its breathing becomes apparent. A hot, wet, animal breath.

DOM
(whispered)
Okay.

A brief, awful, second of stillness. DOM's life hangs in the balance. And then the forest beast presses down upon him. Splitting the offering stake in two. Shoving DOM to the ground with the force of a truck.

DOM is killed instantly. We stay TIGHT ON HIS FACE as he's ripped from the ground. Leaves and brush coming with him. He's carried for several steps. Textures of the night swimming past in the background as --

DOM is lifted up in the air and placed into a tree.

107 INT. BLACK HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING 107

LUKE lies on the bed looking at a shaft of early morning sunlight that cuts across the room. He hasn't slept. No dreams on this night. *There's something different about LUKE.*

He looks around. Sees that if he can manoeuvre his wrist he can rub his binds against the warn wooden edge of his bed.

He begins to rub.

This is his whole focus now. His entire point of living is to rub his binds free.

He's working through his skin at the same pace as he's working through the rope. But he doesn't care. And he doesn't stop.

108 INT. BLACK HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY 108

LUKE works on his binds. Blood dripping from the fraying rope onto the floor.

The sound of footsteps approaching. The door opens. SARA enters. Leaves the door cracked behind her.

LUKE looks up at her. She stares back at him. Something approaching contrition in her eyes.

She puts something on the bed - a white robe and a crown of thorns. LUKE glances over them.

LUKE
Did you cut him down from the tree?

SARA
We don't move the bodies.

LUKE back to the window. Out at the half broken offering stake. Blood still splattered across the wood.

LUKE
Tell me what it is.

Pause.

SARA
She is a god. Ancient. One of the Jotnir.
(whispers)
The bastard offspring of Loki. We do not say her name.

LUKE
You worship it.

SARA
Yes.

LUKE
No. You're afraid of it.

SARA
She lets us live. She gives us life forever.

LUKE
This isn't a life.

SARA
You will see. You can live here. It is better than the other way.

SARA looks out of the window at the forest clearing. The trees shaking ominously in the breeze.

Unseen by her, a drop of LUKE's blood threatens to drip onto the floor. Tension - will she discover his escape attempt?

She turns and looks at him and LUKE notices the scratches on her chest, just like his. Barely visible behind her parted top.

LUKE
How long have you been in this place?

SARA
A long time.

Pause.

LUKE
'To new adventures.'

She stares at him a few beats. Some old memories stirring in her mind. She makes her way quickly to the door.

LUKE (CONT'D)
I won't kneel to it.

She stops, looks back at him.

SARA
(pleading)
Kneel. And live.

109 EXT. VILLAGE CLEARING - DUSK 109

Several of the villagers are preparing for ceremony. They all wear long white smocks.

110 INT. BLACK HOUSE - BEDROOM - DUSK 110

LUKE's food from earlier is untouched.

LUKE lays before the window. Watching the villagers' every move. He sees SARA hard at work.

A THUD from upstairs. LUKE snaps. Turning to look to the ceiling.

He gets back to rubbing at his binds.

111 INT. BLACK HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER 111

Outside the window. The whole village is lit by torchlight.

More THUDS from the attic. Starting to come up in a rhythm.

LUKE rubs his binds. The rope almost frayed through. EGGPER and SARA enter. LUKE stops the rubbing. Lies still

SARA glances at LUKE. EGGPER says something to her harshly - he feels emboldened now he's away from FENRIS. She picks up the crown of thorns and adjusts the twigs.

EGGPER says something to LUKE.

SARA
(translates)
You must wear crown. This is what she wants.

SARA walks over to LUKE and places the crown on his head.

She looks down and notices the rope around LUKE's wrist, blood soaked and almost frayed through. She could raise the alarm if she wanted to.

Her gaze flicks up and she and LUKE make eye contact. Held for several beats. Intense - is she going to do anything? EGGPER, who has not seen the frayed rope, speaks. SARA doesn't respond. He repeats himself, angrily.

SARA (CONT'D)
(translates)
It is almost time.

SARA turns on her heel and walks out, past EGGPER who looks at her, frustrated.

Now it's just LUKE and EGGPER in the room. EGGPER walks over to LUKE, looks down at him. He's speaking to him in his strange language when --

LUKE pulls on his binds with all his strength. The effort of doing so tears at LUKE's worn wrist, exposing bone from where he's rubbed so hard. The rope is almost frayed and it tautens and unwinds and... *snaps*.

LUKE's hand flies up and grabs the surprised EGGPER by the neck. LUKE's hand, slippery with his own blood, grabs at EGGPER's smooth skull, looking for purchase. He pulls EGGPER towards him and gets him into a kind of strangle hold, looking to hurt him, kill him, however he can. LUKE gets a thumb into EGGPER's eye and that's the leverage he needs. He pushes his whole thumb into the socket and swings the head down onto the pillar of the bed, the skull crunching. EGGPER collapses onto the floor, still.

LUKE works fast to untie himself from his binds.

He stands, on shaking legs.

THUD.

THUD.

THUD.

He picks up the crown of thorns which had fallen onto the floor. Places it on his head. A thin trickle of blood flowing down his scalp.

THUD.

THUD.

THUD.

112 INT. BLACK HOUSE - CORRIDOR - NIGHT 112

THUD. THUD. THUD. THUD.

LUKE steps out into the corridor. His restraints still knotted over his wrists, cut at the seam. *He's barefoot.*

He walks, sneaking stealthy, to the main room and looks in - FENRIS is talking to the BALD MAN who presently turns and walks out of the room.

LUKE tiptoes back into the corridor, looks around, head into - -

113 INT. BLACK HOUSE - SIDE ROOM - NIGHT 113

THUD. THUD. THUD.

LUKE steps into the room and stops, taking it in -

The room is full of the left over possessions of years of lost hikers. Backpacks piled in a corner, from all different eras. The equipment of dead men and women. There are also piles of shoes, hats, clothes. Unlit torches.

THUD. THUD. THUD.

And amongst them... Old hunting rifles.

He chooses what looks like the newest one. There are bullets, stored in the ammo notches on a mouldy body warmer near by. LUKE takes them out. Loads one into the chamber, unsure what he's doing.

He steps out and into --

114 INT. BLACK HOUSE - CORRIDOR - NIGHT 114

THUD. THUD. THUD.

LUKE looks up at the ceiling above him.

THUD. THUD. THUD.

He turns and faces the corridor. At the end of it, a stairwell.

THUD. THUD. THUD.

115 INT. BLACK HOUSE - STAIRCASE - MOMENTS LATER 115

CLOSE on a torch as LUKE takes it from its place on the wall.

LUKE puts a foot on the bottom stair. A flaming torch in his hand.

THUD. THUD. THUD.

Begins to ascend. One step at a time.

THUD. THUD. THUD.

Almost to the top.

THUD! THUD! THUD! Getting louder now. More excited.

He can see a door. Half cracked open. He getting to the final step --

THUD! THUD! THU-

Silence.

LUKE pauses. Then pushes the door open.

116 INT. BLACK HOUSE - ATTIC - CONTINUOUS 116

The door creaks to a stop. Something scuttles away in the darkness. LUKE carefully enters.

His eyes adjust to the gloom. The torch in his hand creating a flickering shadows across the room. He's not sure what he's looking at. Then, he can make out --

Seats, set up so that they all face into the darkness, an aisle running down the middle of them. And in the chairs are bodies. Dead looking, almost mummified. Unseeing eyes gazing into the dark. Paper-like skin, strands of hair stuck to pale white scalps. It's a congregation of sorts.

The floor is covered with flowers, some dead, some new. The dead petals crunch under his bare feet.

At the end is a chair. An ANCIENT FIGURE sitting in it. Still. Hard to make out but it seems to be a human. Very old. So old, in fact, that it doesn't seem to have a lower body. It's legs have been sewn into it's wicker thrown.

Bourn into its skull are a set of stag antlers. Its mouth lays permanently open. Utterly horrific.

THUD.

Something moves in the darkness to his right. LUKE directs the torch.

A CRACKING sound. Something brittle and breaking --

It's a HOOVED FIGURE. Smaller than the others, it's arms and legs have been replaced with animal feet. Sewn on where it's appendages have long dropped off.

IT'S YELLOW EYE SPRINGS OPEN!

SUDDENLY, it stamps its feet.

THUD. THUD. THUD.

Several others in the background do the same. Awful, withered faces and eyeless sockets, strands of hair stuck to papery scalps. All coming to life.

THUD. THUD. THUD.

LUKE starts to back away. He winces, his feet pricked by tiny animal bones on the floor. The skulls of rodents.

THUD. THUD. THUD.

The stomping gets louder. They begin to chant the strange language through dry, toothless, mouths.

THUD. THUD. CRACK!

LUKE spins around. *Behind him*. A TALL MUMMY. Wrapped in bandages long ago fuzed to it's skin. It's attempting to stand from its seat. Reaching its reed thin arm out to LUKE, pointing its sharp nailed hand towards his face...

Now here in the torch light he can see clearly: Three old hollow scratch marks dug into its chest. Rotted from the inside out.

THUD. THUD. THUD.

It whispers something from its tongue-less mouth.

LUKE doesn't even think about it. He pushes the torch into its face. It goes up instantly. Dry old paper skin pops in the flames. Lighting the rest of the room.

THUD. THUD. THUD.

LUKE looks back to the ANCIENT FIGURE in its chair. Becoming more visible as the firelight grows. Its chest rising and falling so faintly you can barely see.

LUKE
Some things just shouldn't fucking be.

LUKE staggers down the aisle, touching the flame to each withered old head. They go up almost instantly.

As he backs away. A sound coming from the flame. Something like screaming. Maybe laughing. Maybe anguish.

117 INT. BLACK HOUSE - STAIRCASE - MOMENTS LATER 117

LUKE backs away. There's fear in his eyes again.

<u>The shrieking sound of the mummies grows.</u>

118 EXT. FOREST LINE - NIGHT 118

Stillness in the trees. Then --

A MASSIVE FORCE. Several trees buckle and bend. Something is coming like it's never come before.

119 INT. BLACK HOUSE - CORRIDOR - NIGHT 119

LUKE reaches the bottom of the stairs. Orange glow emanating from the top. Sensing something wrong he runs into --

120 INT. BLACK HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT 120

LUKE moves up to the window. Outside the house, he can see SARA, the SMALL MAN and the FIDGETY WOMAN gathering. Facing the forest.

He cranes his head. He can't tell what they're looking at.

A HUGE CRASH from outside.

All he can make out is the SMALL MAN getting down on his knees. Partially out of LUKE's view.

121 EXT. VILLAGE CLEARING - NIGHT 121

Now we're close to the SMALL MAN as he looks up in fear. From his knees he lays down face first in the dirt and spreads his arms out to the side in worship. *Behind him* --

SARA and the FIDGETY WOMAN do the same. Carefully as not to receive punishment.

SARA presses her head into the earth. Tears in her eyes.

We see a hoofed foot slam down into frame and settle.

122 INT. BLACK HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT 122

LUKE is looking out of the window when he senses a presence. He turns - THE WITCH is there. Standing in the doorway. He points the rifle at her.

LUKE
Get back.

She begins to walk towards him.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Back!

She doesn't listen. He pulls the trigger. Nothing. He looks down at the gun, fiddling with the bolt, trying to find a safety switch, anything...

Meanwhile THE WITCH is moving forward with surprising speed. Her face a mask of menace and cruelty.

She makes it to him, her hands outstretched and -

BOOM!

The gun goes off in his hands and THE WITCH flies backwards, light as a feather, crashing through the corridor and into the other bedroom.

LUKE takes a moment to gather himself then pulls the bolt back on the gun and loads another bullet into the chamber.

123 INT. BLACK HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT 123

LUKE enters, looking around.

Embers fall all around him. The whole house is going up.

SUDDENLY FENRIS IS ON HIM - having leapt from his hiding place behind the door. LUKE throws FENRIS off and spins, rifle up. FENRIS has a small axe in his hand which he throws, getting close enough to LUKE to knock him off balance, the gun firing and missing as FENRIS launches himself at LUKE, taking him down to the floor. They scramble over the hunting rifle.

124 EXT. VILLAGE CLEARING - NIGHT 124

We're CLOSE on SARA's face. A dark shadow drops over her entire body. Bits of forest and dust drop down into her eyes.

The deep, dry rattled breath of an ancient Norse god right above her.

She looks up, shaking.

SARA
(terrified)
Förlåt. Förlåt. I'm Sorry...

125 INT. BLACK HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT 125

LUKE gets in a control position, trying to pry the barrel from FENRIS's hands. FENRIS begins to holler.

LUKE
Shut up! Shut up! Shut the fuck up!

LUKE gets a hold of the gun and pops FENRIS across the face with the barrel. FENRIS goes limp. Blood pooling in one of his eye sockets. LUKE props himself up on one knee, shoves the barrel of the rifle into FENRIS's mouth, breaking off several yellowing teeth, and pulls the trigger.

LUKE shoulders the rifle and picks up FENRIS's axe.

He sees the open door. The village clearing lit by the flame.

He makes a break for the door but --

A hoofed foot slams down blocking the exit. He stumbles backwards. A partial glimpse at the creature's torso outside.

Thin and bony. Ancient skin spreads over old animal parts. Not unlike the abominations upstairs.

LUKE takes this in as --

SARA is brought to the window. Her face looks almost surprised. She is being held there for LUKE to see. Her face is pure terror. She screams - NO!

SUDDENLY -- her white dress turns red as the beast squeezes her. The life going from her eyes. Bones breaking.

LUKE looks away as blood splatters into the room.

SARA is wrenched away. The beast disappearing into the darkness with her.

Above us the roof starts to creak and moan as the fire takes hold. More and more smoke filling the room.

LUKE flips his view to --

A TIGHT WINDOW in the kitchen. Beyond it the edge of the forest. Could he make it?

Something rocks the house. Embers come down all around.

LUKE looks back towards the corridor. The wood is breaking apart. Open flames in the hallway but there's a glimpse the outside world.

LUKE preps himself...

126 INT. BLACK HOUSE - CORRIDOR - NIGHT 126

He races down the hallway past open flame. Crawling through the collapse out to --

127 EXT. VILLAGE CLEARING - NIGHT 127

LUKE, free of the house, sprints for the tree line. The SMALL MAN, The BALD MAN and FIDGETY WOMAN can be seen desperately running into the burning house through the front door. The surrounding clearing is lit by the burning house, giving him a sense of space and distance. Free at last --

LUKE stumbles and goes down. Barefoot and clumsy. Rifle still on his shoulder. Now scrambling on all fours. He flips over. Defensive. Backing away across the ground when he --

STOPS.

<u>The beast is there.</u> It hasn't seen him. It moves at a distance. Fifty meters back towards the burning house.

Silhouetted against the flames - its shape highlighted by the orange and smoke.

It rounds the house. Looks in a few of the windows.

SARA still in its hand.

LUKE stares back at it. A sense of horror and awe. He has the jump on it. *How do you shoot a Norse god in the back?*

LUKE slowly raises the rifle.

FIRES.

The beast recoils only slightly. Looks in his direction. Right at him. Luke's heart drops.

And then it's gone. Fast. Into the night. Coming for him.

LUKE leaves the gun behind.

128 EXT. FOREST FIREGLOW - NIGHT 128

LUKE runs like he's never run before. Panting and gasping. Fear coursing through his body. The forest taking on a surreal orange hue. Out of time and place. To the side there's movement - the beast running, its form occasionally visible against the light of the fire.

It crosses over from the side, knocking LUKE down, and disappearing into the shadows.

LUKE lies in a heap. Staying still for a few moments. He listens and hears the beast close by, ready to pounce.

He needs to get moving. He needs to get up and run.

A growl in the darkness puts up the hairs on the back of his neck.

And then... Ahead of him in the distance a ceiling light turns on, then another and another, coming towards him, illuminating the way forward until up to twenty lights, suspended in the air, light a corridor of forest that melds with the supermarket of his nightmares. Shelves of produce, broken bottles and a single eight ball rolling past.

LUKE pulls himself up and begins to run.

Behind him the beast roars.

As he hits the marker of the first light the pattern repeats but this time the lights are turning off, starting with the one most distant to him, so that LUKE is now running towards an increasing tunnel of darkness.

The beast closes in on him. It's on the other side of the shelves. LUKE presses himself against a shelf as the beast searches him out.

A CLAWED HAND BURSTS THROUGH THE SHELF LOOKING FOR LUKE.

LUKE ducks and runs, pushing on through the darkness.

As he runs he sees them - his friends. HUTCH, PHIL, DOM and ROBERT. They all stand in their own mini shrines, twenty little candles around their feet, illuminating them from the floor. They watch him as he staggers on.

129 EXT. FOREST/EDGE OF FOREST - DAWN 129

On and on LUKE runs and there he sees it, the edge of the forest, he might make it...

The BEAST leaps out from the side, knocking LUKE down!

He rolls to a stop by the foot of a tree. Out of breath.

LUKE looks up slowly. Takes in its immensity --

Towering above him at over twelve feet tall. Behind it the embers swirl and dance from the now distant fire. Almost forming a halo. A creature from Norse hell.

<u>He sees the beast's face.</u>

It huffs at him. Ancient dry lungs.

LUKE tries to stand.

The beast Reaches out a clawed hand and grips LUKE's shoulder. LUKE grimaces as it pushes --

LUKE is pushed down to the floor. A rough approximation of the pose of worship the villagers pulled.

But LUKE refuses to worship. He tries to pull himself up but the beast pushes him down again.

LUKE tries again and the beast, angrier, more violent, roars and pushes him down.

Which is when LUKE comes up swinging. The axe that he took from FENRIS cuts through the air and slices through one of the beasts human-like front appendages. The force of the swing takes axe and flesh and embeds them into a tree stump. The beast screams and roars and flails and LUKE is on his feet. He grabs the axe and starts running... running madly for the edge of the forest which is no more than ten feet away.

130 EXT. MEADOW - MORNING 130

LUKE makes it. Bursts out into the open, falling and stumbling to the ground. His ankle going under him, a sharp burst of pain.

LUKE scrambles up, he can't run. But he still has the axe. He turns onto his back, axe up, ready to make a final stand...

But the beast is not there. It has not pursued him.

He stands, painfully.

A growl from the forest. The trees shake. The beast is close.

Beat.

LUKE takes a step towards the forest.

A warning growl from within.

The beast is there. Looking at LUKE from the shadows of the trees. It holds its bleeding stump, breathing deeply, matching LUKE's own breaths.

LUKE and the beast stare at each other. Neither straying into the other's domain.

The beast's gaze seems stray past LUKE and LUKE turns, looks over his shoulder - Behind him is a meadow of long grass and flat rolling fields. And through that - a road. Cars passing. Traffic. Odd normality.

LUKE turns back and when he does we see that the beast is stock still. Unnaturally so. LUKE takes a faltering step to his right. And we see what we thought was the beast is not the beast at all, but a formation of trees.

He is totally alone.

His hands find the scratches on his chest. They are real. It happened.

He turns back to the meadow. And begins to walk.

END.